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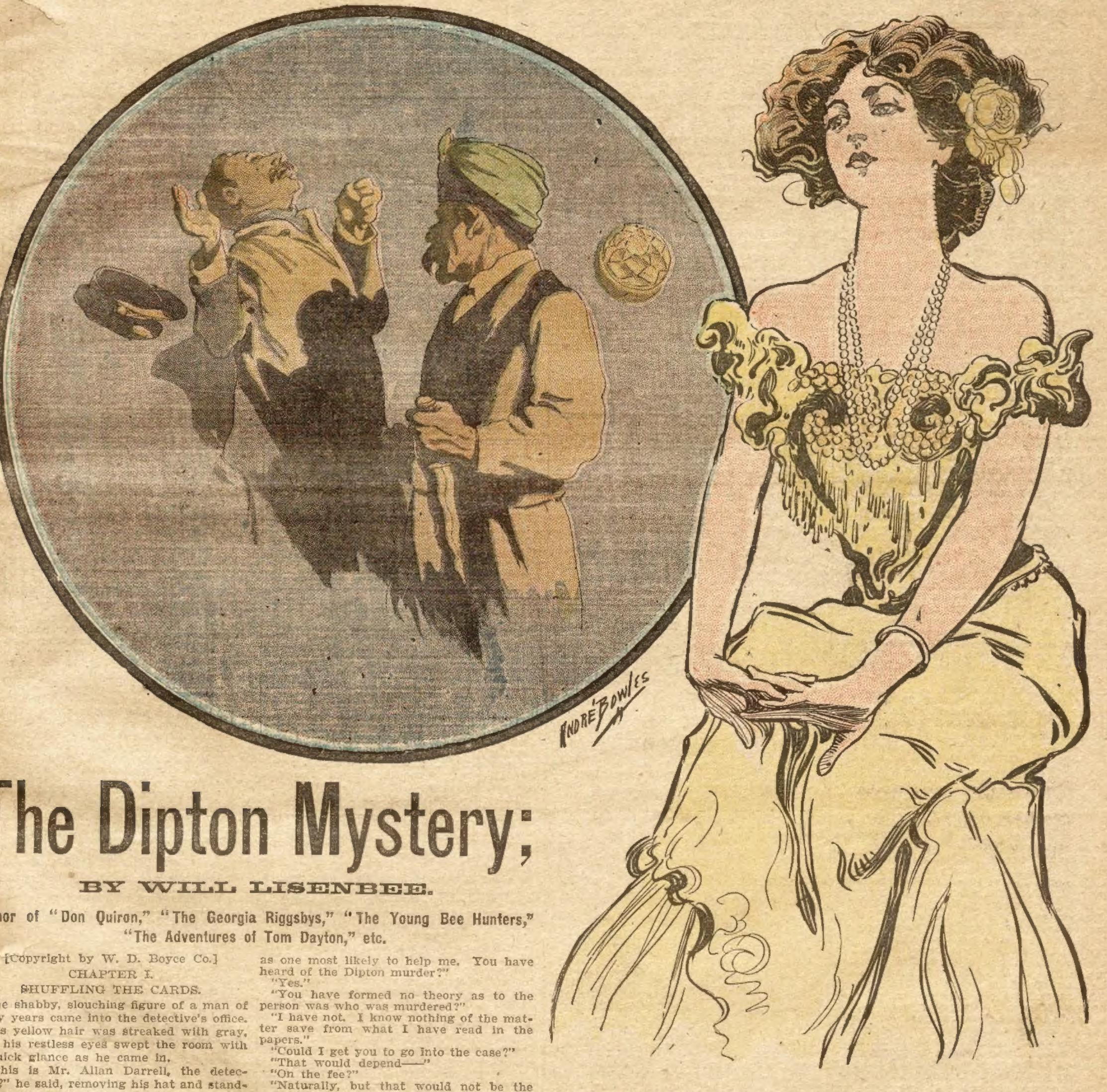
THE CHICAGO LEDGER

VOL. XXXV. NO. 30. CHICAGO, ILL., SATURDAY, JULY 27, 1907. SINGLE COPIES 5 CENTS.



The Dipton Mystery;

BY WILL LISENBEE.

Author of "Don Quiron," "The Georgia Riggsbys," "The Young Bee Hunters," "The Adventures of Tom Dayton," etc.

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CHAPTER I.

SHUFFLING THE CARDS.

The shabby, slouching figure of a man of forty years came into the detective's office.

His yellow hair was streaked with gray, and his restless eyes swept the room with a quick glance as he came in.

"This is Mr. Allan Darrell, the detective?" he said, removing his hat and standing in a respectful attitude.

The detective replied in the affirmative, and at the same time took a hasty inventory of the stranger's appearance.

The man was of powerful frame. A two weeks' growth of beard covered his face; his garments were shabby and covered with dust, and there was that about him that hinted of the tramp.

But Darrell was one of those who learned to look deeper than the surface.

There was something in the face of the visitor that told the detective that he was on important business. He motioned to a chair and the stranger dropped into it with a grateful sigh.

"What can I do for you?" asked the detective.

"My name is Jason Frew," replied the visitor, "and I have been directed to you as one most likely to help me. You have heard of the Dipton murder?"

"Yes."

"You have formed no theory as to the person was who was murdered?"

"I have not. I know nothing of the matter save from what I have read in the papers."

"Could I get you to go into the case?"

"That would depend——"

"On the fee?"

"Naturally, but that would not be the only thing to consider. The importance of the case for instance——"

"I will let you be the judge. But I shall not be able to pay your fee, for I am a poor man."

"You expect me to work for the glory to be got out of it?"

"No; while I say I cannot pay you, I mean that I cannot promise with any certainty to do so, yet I may be able to pay you one of the handsomest fees you ever received."

"You have a personal interest in the case?"

"Yes, an interest that involves a fortune."

"You knew the murdered man?"

"Yes, I knew him."

"He has been dead two months. Why have you waited so long?"

"I just arrived in America a week ago. For months I have searched for Fenton Gurlock."

"Tell me the whole story."

"For many years I was a sailor before the mast, aboard the schooner Spitfire, Captain Nevius, plying between Bombay and the ports along the coast to the south. Fenton Gurlock, the mate, was a man of some thirty years. I knew very little about him. But this much I know, he had a sweetheart in Bombay, and whenever we touched at that port he went ashore to pay her a visit.

"I did not know his sweetheart's name, nor did I ever see her, but that Gurlock was very fond of her there could be no doubt. He carried her picture with him, and often at sea I have seen him stand and gaze at it, his whole soul in his eyes.

"I saw the picture. It was a lovely face, such a one as might lead a man to distraction. Great dark eyes, a splendid oval face and a mass of wavy hair that fell like a cloud about her shoulders.

"She looked every inch a lady, sir, and I have no doubt that she was well born. Gurlock was a poor man, a little too fond of the gaming table, I happen to know, though he never drank to excess. He was not much of a man to talk of himself, but once we were both ashore at Bombay—it was at the end of our last voyage in the Spitfire—he talked of himself more than he had ever done before.

"I had dropped into an eating house frequented by seafaring men, and was having my supper when Gurlock came in. His face was white as death and he half fell into a chair at my table. It was a long time before he would speak, and when he did his voice was so changed that I could hardly recognize it. He told me his trouble, after I had got him to take a drink of rum, and it was the old story, sir. His sweetheart had married his rival, who was rich, and Gurlock, poor devil, was left to nurse his disappointment as best he could.

"I never saw a man cut up worse than he was. He looked like a corpse, and there was a glitter in his eyes that I did not like. That he would have killed his rival, I had little doubt, but I learned that the married pair had sailed for England more than a week before.

"When he had finished his story, I tried to cheer him the best I could, but he was like one gone mad. I urged him to come with me aboard the Spitfire, but he shook his head.

" 'No, no, Jason,' he said. 'Never again will I set foot on the deck of the Spitfire. I am done for and there's an end of it!' I urged him to come with me out into the night air. I thougnt it might do him good, for he was in a state that might end in suicide.

"We left the eating house and went out into the night. We walked aimlessly through the streets. Gurlock hardly spoke. Again and again I urged him to come with me aboard the schooner, but he refused.

"At length we found ourselves in a low quarter of the city, where dingy grog shops and low gambling dens turned night into day. We heard a cry for help. It pierced the night like a knife. It was in our own language, the cry of some countryman in distress. We ran down the dark alley from whence the sounds had proceeded. We saw a dark form leap up and dart away—a sinuous form that fled with the speed of the wind. As it passed a light I saw the face for an instant—the dark, evil face of a Hindu. And then we tumbled over something lying huddled in a little heap at our feet. We bent over it. It was a man and he was moaning in the agonies of death. We took him up and carried him into a lodging house nearby, notified the police and sent for a doctor.

"As soon as the light fell on the dying man's face we knew him. It was Jim Haskins, a shipmate of ours, who had deserted the Spitfire several months before to go into the interior in some sort of a mad quest for a great treasure.

"A lignt of recognition came into the dying man's eyes as he looked into our faces.

" 'I am done fer, mates,' he said. 'That black devil has followed me night and day for months and now he has done his work. But he didn't git the treasure, mates—the great Midnight Sun—the sacred jewel of the heathen temple. It and the other diamonds are sewed in the lining of my coat. They would have made me rich—rich! They would have made the poor sailor a millionaire, but now—now they are but ashes in my hands. Take them, mates. You are poor as I have been, and they will make you rich. You will never know want or poverty again, nor what it is to be driven about like a dog. I have no kith or kin, and I can do no better than to leave them to those who have been my friends.' A choking sound came from his throat and he never spoke again.

"We opened his coat and found there a canvas bag. We did not open it there, but stored it in my pocket. The next day the body of poor Jim Haskins was buried decently and with fitting ceremonies, the captain of the Spitfire and a number of the sailors following him to his last resting place.

"That night Gurlock and I, in the seclusion of our own room at a cheap lodging house, opened the bag. What we saw before us was such a sight as had never dazzled our eyes. I shall never forget that moment till my dying day."

The strange visitor paused to wipe the perspiration from his brow, while the detective, a curious look on his face, waited for him to go on.

CHAPTER II.

A STRANGE STORY.

"The sight was enough to turn one's head," went on the sailor, "for there before us was wealth greater than we had ever dreamed of—and it was ours—ours!"

He paused again to wipe the dampness from his brow.

"I fear I weary you with all this," he continued, "but my story is near its end. Maybe you do not know what it is to be poor, and then of a sudden to find yourself rich beyond your wildest dreams? We, Gurlock and I, stood there like beings turned to stone. I could not bring myself to believe that it was not all a dream. All my life I had hoped and looked forward to such an hour, and often it had come to me in dreams and I had awakened to the hard reality of my poverty and life of toil.

"Now, as I looked at the glittering jewels and tried to realize that they were, half of them, to be mine, it seemed too good to be true. We took them in our hands and played with them, caressed them as a child might have done a new toy. We laughed in transport of joy, and I tell you, sir, you would have thought us mad.

"When we had at last come to our senses so as to think calmly, Gurlock said: 'Jason, we are rich men. We need never work again. We will never return to the Spitfire. We must tell no one of our good fortune. Tomorrow we will sail for England; once in London, we will sell the jewels and divide the money. I don't know their value, but they ought to bring easily one hundred thousand pounds. This sum will make us both independent for life.'

"I fell in with his plan, and we took passage for England. The first thing we did on arriving in London was to sell one of the smaller diamonds, so that we would have what money we needed to defray our expenses till the others could be sold. We wanted to take our time for this, for we were ignorant of their value and might easily lose a fortune by being in too great haste to dispose of them.

"We received two hundred pounds for the one sold, and we felt that we should be able to take our time in finding a market for the others. We hardly knew how to proceed. We were both strangers in London, and it was easy to imagine the sensation it would cause among the jewelers when we should offer the magnificent diamonds for sale. The large diamond alone might be worth many times what we had estimated, and we would be compelled to give a clear account of how we had come into possession of it before it could be sold.

"Who would believe our story? We might be suspected of robbery, and even arrested. Had the stones been in the rough we might easily have been believed by claiming to have mined them, but they were cut, and any large diamond—especially one of the size and brilliancy of the 'Midnight Sun'—would have a history, and would be known to the leading diamond merchants of the world. To lay down the 'Midnight Sun' before the gaze of some London jeweler would doubtless throw him into a spasm, and it is likely that the first thing he would do would be to call for the police.

"Gurlock and I talked this over, and while we were laying our plans Gurlock suddenly disappeared, taking the jewels with him. My first impression was that he had been robbed and probably killed. But I soon got track of him. I followed the trail to Southampton and there discovered that he had taken passage for America.

"I tell you, sir, if ever a fellow was miserable it was I. It is hard to lose faith in one you think your friend, and at the same time find yourself deprived of a fortune.

"I was stunned and bewildered. I knew not what to do. But I soon decided on a course. I had nearly five hundred dollars in my pocket, and this would enable me to go in pursuit of the man who had robbed me, and I was determined never to stop till I ran him down.

"I tracked him to New York, and finally to Dipton, only to find that he had been murdered. That is the story, and the mystery of it is for you to solve. Where are the jewels? Who murdered him? Find an answer to these questions for me and I will pay you the largest fee you ever received."

The stranger paused, and leaning back in his chair gazed at the detective with questioning eyes.

It was a strange story—one that would have challenged the detective's belief under ordinary circumstances, but a single glance into the sailor's face was sufficient to convince him that he told the truth.

"Have you found out any clue as to what brought Gurlock to Dipton?" asked the detective.

"I have not."

"How, then, do you know that the murdered man was Gurlock?"

"Because I had tracked him to the place and also identified an old silver watch that was found on the body as the one carried by the mate of the Spitfire. Then, from a description of the body, I am convinced I have made no mistake."

"Did Fenton Gurlock dispose of any of the jewels in New York?"

"Not that I could discover."

"Did he offer any of them for sale?"

"I could not learn."

"Are you positive that no one else besides yourselves knew that you and your partner had the jewels?"

"I don't see how any one could have known it."

"He had no enemies that you know of?"

"None."

"Was he an Englishman?"

"I think so, though I have heard him speak of having been in America."

"Did he mention any particular place?"

"He spoke of being in New York."

"Has he any relatives living?"

"I don't know. He was a man who said very little of himself."

The detective reflected a moment.

"This is an interesting case," he said at length. "I had planned to take a little vacation, but I might put it off for a time."

"Then you will take the case?"

"Yes. I will be ready to go with you to Dipton tomorrow."

Jason Frew held out his hand.

"I thank you," he said. "I believe you can get at the bottom of this affair if any one can."

"A few more words," said Darrell. "Did you visit the Red Stag Inn when at Dipton?"

"Yes."

"You know, of course, that Gurlock stopped there?"

"Yes."

"Did you talk to the landlord?"

"Yes."

"You will remember that Simon Rushton, the proprietor of the Red Stag, identified the body of the murdered man as the person who had stopped at his inn the night before?"

"Yes; I had read a complete account of the affair in the papers."

"Did you ask Rushton to give you a description of the man?"

"Yes, and it tallied with that of Gurlock."

"Yet he gave his name as Henry Bates."

"So it seems, but I am not surprised at that.'

"He suspected that you might be on his track?"

"Possibly, but he probably had another reason."

"What was that?"

"It has occurred to me that he might have been on the track of his rival—the man who had married his sweetheart—the man against whom he had sworn vengeance."

"Ah, I see. But you said this man sailed for England?"

"So he did. But I understand that he was an American."

"Indeed! Did you learn his name?"

"I did not. Gurlock never mentioned it. As I said before, he was close mouthed and had little to say about himself or his affairs."

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"Did Gurlock get any trace of the married pair while in London?"

"If he did he never mentioned the fact to me."

"Did he speak of the matter while there?"

"Yes, now that I come to think of it."

"What did he say?"

"He spoke of the fortune we should have when the stones were disposed of, and he swore to devote his whole fortune to bringing vengeance on his rival."

"Do you think he might have suddenly discovered some trace of his rival and rushed off on the trail without having time to tell you?"

"I hardly think so, but it might have been."

"Well, meet me here tomorrow and we'll go down to Dipton on a little fishing jaunt."

CHAPTER III.

ANOTHER VISITOR.

"That was a deuced queer story Jason Frew told," mused the detective after his visitor had taken his departure, "and one that few persons would believe, yet he was telling the truth. There is something alluring in the very strangeness of it. It interests me, and I shall probe the mystery to the bottom—whether or not I ever receive any fee."

He turned to his desk, took from a pigeon hole some newspaper clippings giving an account of the Dipton murder case and began looking them over.

For a half hour he had sat thus when a tap came at the door. When it was opened a man entered. He was well dressed, perhaps some thirty odd years old, handsome, with a pair of dark eyes and short cropped mustaches of the same hue.

"You are Allan Darrell, the detective?" he said in an easy way as he entered.

As he spoke he took a card from his pocket and handed it to the detective, at the same time dropping into the chair which Darrell pushed to him.

With a little surprise Darrell read the card:

"Reginald Sethfield,
"Dipton, New Jersey."

"Well, Mr. Sethfield, what can I do for you?"

"I want your assistance in a little matter that has been giving me much annoyance and puzzling me a great deal," was the reply. "I come to you because I know you by reputation as one of the ablest detectives in the profession."

Darrell bowed in acknowledgment of the compliment.

"You were employed a short time since on a robbery case by old Nathan Beasley, a few weeks before the old man died? The work you did in detecting the robber and bringing him to justice was remarkable. I mention this in order to call to your mind something about the household of Nathan Beasley. I think you spent some days at the Cypresses, as the Beasley place near Dipton is called, during the time you were at work on the case?"

"Yes, I think I was there pretty nearly a week."

"Then you must know something of the people at the Cypresses?"

"I think I might recall the names of most of them."

"Very well; we shall come to that again presently. At the death of Nathan Beasley, my wife, whose maiden name was Brockton, inherited the Cypresses."

"Ah, I see. She was the Alice Brockton, spoken of at the time as the heiress to the estate of Nathan Beasley?"

"Exactly. Probably you do not know the provisions of Beasley's will. It provided that all the old servants should be retained at the Cypresses, with the same pay they had received at his hands, and that his ward, Miss Katharine Hope, should have a home at the Cypresses so long as she desired. So you will see, the household at the Cypresses, excepting for myself and wife and a single servant, is pretty much the same as it was during Beasley's life.

"Now, among old Beasley's peculiarities—for he had a good many—was his fondness of old books. There is a large library at the Cypresses, as you doubtless know, and one section of it was devoted to rare old books, and first editions of noted works. A lot of rubbish, according to my idea, but rubbish that cost a neat sum of money.

"My wife realized the folly of keeping the books, having no taste for such things, and she decided to sell them. She had been corresponding with some dealers in such wares, and had figured that they would bring quite a little fortune, when we discovered that the most valuable of them were missing. They had been disappearing, a few at a time, as far as we can remember, but she merely thought that I had removed them and had neglected to replace them. Now, we want you to help find the books, and if possible, the thief."

Reginald Sethfield leaned back in his chair and gazed calmly at the detective.

"Is there no one about the Cypresses that you would suspect?" Darrell asked, after a moment's silence.

"I can't tell as to that. I am a fellow that would suspect his grandmother, for that matter, but suspecting people and proving their guilt are different propositions. The whole outfit left there by Beasley may be a den of thieves for all I know, but they all have the best sort of reputations."

"Has there been any visitor about the place that might be suspected?"

"None that I can think of."

"Was there any evidence that the place had been burglarized—any window fastenings or locks broken?"

"I think not."

"Have you looked carefully?"

"Yes."

"It will not be hard to trace the books if they have been disposed of."

"I dare say, but it is precious little I know about the books. My wife can probably give you the necessary information. When car you come to Dipton?"

"Tomorrow."

"Very well. You will stay at the Cypresses as my guest. I will introduce you as an old friend of mine. Is there any one there who might recognize you as the detective who served Mr. Beasley some time ago?"

"No. No one knew my business there at that time, excepting Nathan Beasley himself."

"Suppose you appear there under the name of Mr. Allan?"

"That will do. I used the name on my former visit, and that is the name I was known by. But no one knew I was a detective. Mr. Beasley took care as to that."

"Good. Then we shall have no trouble on that score."

A few minutes later Mr. Sethfield departed.

Darrell lighted a cigar and gazed through the rings of smoke that floated toward the ceiling.

"The peaceful little village of Dipton seems to be waking up," he mused. "I suppose I had as well kill two birds with one stone as not."

The next morning he crossed to Jersey City, and at the railroad station was joined by Jason Frew.

"There is another little matter I shall have to look after at Dipton," said Darrell, "so I shall have to divide my time between the two cases."

"All right," nodded Frew. "Suit yourself about that. I have a little business to look after here, and I shall join you at Dipton tomorrow."

"All right. I shall not need you as far as I can see, but may need to consult you later on."

"I will stop at the Red Stag Inn on my arrival."

A few minutes later Darrell had boarded the train and was on his way to Dipton.

CHAPTER IV.

AT THE CYPRESSES.

As Allan Darrell entered the train he looked about him in vain for an empty seat.

He was about to turn to enter another car when his eye caught a familiar face—the face of a girl of not over seventeen. She was slender and graceful; her eyes of deepest hazel, her hair of a rich dark brown that looked like gold when touched by a strong light. She was dressed in black which emphasized the ivory whiteness of her face.

"Miss Hope!" cried the detective, a look of pleasure coming over his handsome face. "This is a pleasure, I assure you."

She smiled brightly, putting out a shapely hand to take the one extended.

"Mr. Allan has a good memory for faces," she smiled.

"Not for all faces," he replied.

"Oh," she said, coloring.

"I am pleased to find that you have not forgotten me," he said.

"After you had rescued me from that awful cow that chased me down the lane at the Cypresses?" she replied. "I should be ungrateful, indeed, to forget my deliverer so soon."

He laughed softly.

"I had quite forgotten that heroic deed," he responded, the memory of the days spent at the Cypresses coming vividly to his mind. And this was Katharine Hope? She had seemed a mere child but a few months before. What a lovely creature she was getting to be! He wondered now how it was that he had not taken more notice of her. How superbly beautiful she looked in black!

"Do you travel far?" she asked

"To Dipton," he replied.

"To Dipton?"

There as a note of surprise in her voice.

"I have a little business down there," he went on, "and as it is about time to take my usual vacation, I saw a good chance to kill two birds with one stone."

"Oh, how stupid of me," she said suddenly, moving aside to give him part of her seat. "I am keeping you standing."

"You are very kind," he responded as he sank into the seat by her side. "I have often wondered why so many people are traveling and where they are going. It seems as if the American people spend half their time and money on railroads and in fares."

"Are you not an American?" she asked.

"Yes, I am an American," he laughed, "but I have spent several years in Europe."

"Have you friends in Dipton?" she asked.

"I have an acquaintance there—Mr. Sethfield, who has kindly invited me to visit him at the Cypresses."

"Then you know Mr. Sethfield?" she asked in surprise.

"I made his acquaintance in New York."

"I—I thought he was recently from some foreign country," she said hesitatingly.

"I have not known him long," replied Darrell. "I had some business with him. He knew me as a friend of Mr. Beasley's. I hope you will not be displeased at his inviting me to the Cypresses?"

"Why should I be?" she replied. "His wife is the mistress of the Cypresses, and they have a right to invite whom they please."

"But it is your home also?"

"So it was stipulated in Mr. Beasley's will," she said with a listless air.

A wearied look came into her dark eyes. Darrell saw that the subject was distasteful to her and changed it.

At Dipton the carriage from the Cypresses was in waiting for Miss Hope, and as Darrell handed her into the vehicle, she merely inclined her head in response to his good-by. Then the carriage rolled away.

The detective walked up the quiet street to the Red Stag Inn, where he was met by the obsequious landlord, Mr. Simon Rushton, who gave him a cordial welcome.

"I see you have your fishing tackle with you," he said. "You will find our streams an excellent place to try your skill. This is a quiet place, Mr. Allan, just such as one would wish to find who is tired of the noise and heat of the city."

"I think I shall stop here a few days," replied Darrell. And pressing a twenty dollar bill into the hand of the landlord, he went on in a low tone, "You will not mention that I am a reporter?"

"Not a word, Mr. Allan. I shouldn't be keeping an inn if I didn't know the value of keeping my mouth shut. I know more than one man who has talked himself out of business, but that is not my style. I have always found the members of the newspaper craft the best fellows in the world, and I am always at their service. There have been a good many here since the murder was committed, and I have tried to serve them the best I could. You see, I was in possession of most of the facts, as I am the coroner and conducted the inquest."

"Ah, then you must know about all that is known here about the case," said Darrell.

"I think I do, and if you care to go over the matter for your paper I am at your service whenever you are ready."

"Thanks. I think I'll take a look into the case later on. Have you the murdered man's clothes and the articles found on the body in your possession?"

"Yes, sir, everything. I shall be pleased to let you see them at any time."

"Very well. We'll look at them this evening. Meantime, if you will give me a bite to eat I'll take a little run up the creek with my rod and see what luck I shall have."

"You shall have the best in the house and immediately," responded Rushton.

An hour later Darrell left the inn, and descending the slope to the creek, followed its winding course for a quarter of a mile. Then he turned eastward, crossed the hill and set out along a dim shady road in the direction of the Cypresses.

The air was hot and oppressive, and the white, glittering shafts of sunlight came like flaming arrows through the openings between the trees.

Darrell removed his hat that his brow might catch the cooling breeze and walked slowly under the arching trees.

The Cypresses was a wide, rambling building, with wide porches covered with creeping vines. The quiet gray of the walls looked cool and inviting under the shade of the giant elms. But the grounds and the garden showed signs of neglect. Weeds encroached on the beds of flowers, and tall clusters of the noxious jimson weed flourished along the lane.

As Darrell entered the broad gate and walked down the white graveled path, Reginald Sethfield, dressed in a white duck suit, came from the shady recesses of the porch to meet him.

"Well, this is an unexpected pleasure, Mr. Allan," he said in an easy way, so that his words might be heard by some servants who were in the kitchen garden. "So you have decided to run down here for a little season of rest from the heat and distractions of city life? I am happy to welcome you."

"And I am sure I appreciate it," responded Darrell, taking Sethfield's extended hand. "This is a charming retreat you have here, and might easily tempt me to desert the city for good—only one must live and the exactions that come from having to earn one's bread do not always allow us the pleasure of choosing our place of abode."

"That is unfortunately the truth," replied Sethfield, "but that is no reason why one need not break away from the tread mill now and then. But where is your luggage?"

"I left it at the Red Stag, where I am quartered for the present."

"And after you had promised to spend a part of your vacation at the Cypresses?"

"Oh, never fear. I shall probably make you tired enough of me before I leave the sylvian precincts of Dipton. Our good friend Simon Rushton has promised to show me some good fishing during my stay, and I feel in duty bound to reciprocate by patronizing his excellent establishment."

"Well, you will find the latch string out at the Cypresses at any time you can give us the pleasure of your company. But here comes my wife."

They had reached the porch by this time, and as Darrell glanced up he saw a woman approaching. She could not have been over twenty—possibly not that. She was clad in a light flimsy garment of white that showed a full form. She moved with an easy grace, with that subtle grace of movement that is the charm of woman. A mass of dark brown hair framed an oval face of rare loveliness.

"Mr. Allan, allow me to introduce you to my wife," Sethfield was saying; "Alice, this is Mr. Allan, a friend of mine whom I have asked to spend his vacation at the Cypresses."

And as he bowed low over the slender white hand that was extendned to greet him, there was but one thought in his brain, and that kept repeating itself over and over.

"Where and when had he seen this woman before?"

CHAPTER V.

A SMALL TRINKET.

Darrell was studying the woman's face as he responded politely to her greeting of welcome—trying to solve the problem as to where and when he had seen her before.

"Mr. Allan is an architect," Sethfield went on, "and I am going to have him make a thorough inspection of the Cypresses so that he can give us some plans for remodeling the building. It is sadly in need of it."

"I am sure it is a charming place as it is," said Darrell, "and it seems a pity to exchange its quaint air of comfort and quiet seclusion for the conventional appointments of the modern home."

"I see you are a sentimentalist," interposed Sethfield. "It is all nice enough as a theory, but that is as far as it goes. As for me, give me the improvements of the modern home and let the romance and sentiment go hang."

"I quite agree with Mr. Allan," said Mrs. Sethfield, with a gracious smile. "The Cypresses is a charming, snug retreat for one who wants to get away from the discordant sounds of worldly strife, but I must bow to the will of my lord and master and let the remodeling go on—only asking that he shall not disfigure the place with new paint."

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"I am sure you are quite generous in your concessions," smiled Darrell.

She laughed, showing rows of milk-white teeth.

"Oh, I am an obedient wife," she said, with a little shrug of her shapely shoulders, "and have had the wisdom to learn how far I can go in transgressing my husband's wishes."

"By which she would lead you to believe she is a martyr to my iron will," protested Sethfield. "But I know better than that, if no one else does."

While they were talking Katharine Hope, who had just come from the flower garden, approached, a cluster of old fashioned pinks in her hand.

She looked very beautiful, so Allan Darrell thought, as she glided onto the scene like some apparition.

She nodded blithely to the detective as she passed, but went on into the house without any further greeting.

"You have met Miss Hope before, of course?" said Sethfield.

"Oh, certainly," replied Darrell. "I met her when I was at the Cypresses nearly a year ago, and again today as I came from the city."

"An excellent young lady," remarked Sethfield, stroking his chin reflectively. "And beautiful, too, if I might be allowed to say so in the presence of my wife."

He laughed softly as he spoke.

"Oh, you mustn't mind my presence," said his wife with a visible curl of the lip. "I shall not attempt to abridge a free expression of your vagaries."

"Suppose we change the subject," interposed Sethfield, "to something of a more cooling nature. Alice, my dear, will you direct Ezra to mix us some iced drinks? Ezra is quite an artist in that line, Mr. Allan," he added, turning to the detective, "and I think you will agree with me when you have sampled some of his creations."

Mrs. Sethfield gave the order and Ezra Drake, the butler, soon made his appearance, bearing a waiter laden with its freight of iced beverages and clinking cut glass.

"You will find these mint juleps about right," remarked Sethfield. "Ezra is from Mississippi, where the preparing of mint juleps has long ago been reduced to a fine art, and he is a past master of it. The North may lead in industrial ente[illegible]s and the art of accumulation, but the [illegible] of concocting the mint julep must a[illegible]s belong to the South."

So Sethfield kept running on in a lively manner, being mildly reproved now and then by his wife, who declared that he was not satisfied unless he could do all the talking.

"And now," said Sethfield, when the cooling drinks had been disposed of, "we will take a little glance over the building, if you are ready, Mr Allan?"

"With pleasure," consented Darrell, and he followed his host into the library.

They passed through a hallway, and turning to the left, entered the library.

It was a wide, airy room, with an abundance of light. The bookcases which were of oak grown dark with age, occupied most of the available space on two sides of the room, and were filled with an immense array of volumes.

Near one of the large windows was a large library table strewn with books, and just back of it a desk of heavy oak. A few easy chairs and a couch completed the furniture.

"Now, Mr. Allan," said Sethfield, speaking in a low tone, "I wish you to take a good look over the room. I don't suppose you will find anything like a clue, but you know best. The case there to the left is the one in which the rare volumes I spoke of have been kept."

Darrell approached the bookcase, and drawing a chair before it, seated himself.

He ran his eyes over it carefully.

"Have you been in the habit of using any of the books in this case?" he asked.

"I never touch them, and I am sure my wife does not. Of course we examined them when we discovered that some were missing."

"Do you know how many are gone?"

"Six volumes, as you can see by the vacant places on the top shelf, for the shelf was full."

"You know the titles?"

"Yes. There is a catalogue on the desk there, made out by Mr. Beasley himself. It gives a short history of each book, when and where it was purchased, from whom and the amount paid. I have here a list of the missing books, copied from the catalogue, and if you will look it over you will see that they represent quite a little fortune."

He handed the detective a slip of paper as he spoke, and Darrell took it and glanced at it and was amazed at the total amount set opposite the six volumes. It amounted to over twenty thousand dollars, the 1720 edition of Dante's Divina Commedia being valued at $8,000.

"Quite a snug sum," nodded Darrell, "and well worth the trouble of a professional. Have you showed the books or spoken of them to any one?"

"No. The subject of the books has not been mentioned excepting through a correspondence my wife has had with some dealers in New York and Boston."

"Still, it is more than probable that Mr. Beasley showed the books to many people."

"He had but few visitors, and those were not of the kind who would be likely to have designs on the books."

Darrell opened the door of the bookcase and let his eyes run over the titles of the volumes.

Suddenly his gaze was riveted on something lying at the very edge of the bottom shelf.

A vivid light sprang into his eyes, and without uttering a word he took the trinket from the shelf and dropped it into his pocket.

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"Lord, No."

Hicks—I thought you said he was a Freewill Baptist.

Wicks—Lord, no! He's married.

A YOUNG GIRL'S PERIL;

Or

The Wellington Jewels.

By T. C. HARBAUGH, author of "Robespierre," "Alice of Maryland," "Bluebell's Secret," etc.

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Begun in No. 29, July 20. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER V.

THE PEAR SHAPED PEARL.

The mystery connected with Vestal Cummings' vanishment grew deeper.

The police were at fault, and what at first appeared an easy trial, grew so complex that the shrewdest ones were baffled. So was Paul Partland. Not that he had given up his search for the girl, but the mystery only deepened as he advanced.

Towards the close of the third day of his hunt he appeared at the door of the house where Vestal had lodged. Mrs. Morris was glad to see him, hoping that he had some news of Vestal in which she could rejoice with him.

"I have no news as yet," said Paul. "I have come to take another look through her room."

In a few moments he was alone in the little apartment that had been so dear to Vestal before the great shadow came. It had been visited by the police time and again, but they had gone away unrewarded. Now Paul had come thither in hopes that he would find some clue to the whereabouts of the woman he loved and whom he believed innocent.

The day had not altogether gone and there was light enough to enable him to search the room.

He could not hope for much success, but had he known what was to reward him perhaps he would have left the place with his task unfinished.

There were little keepsakes in the silent room too sacred for him to touch.

"It is no use," said he aloud at last. "She left no clue behind as though she wanted none to be found, not even by me."

Suddenly his eye caught sight of something that lay near the wall on the plain carpet. It seemed to have a dull glitter and Paul went toward it with breathless interest.

In another moment he held a pearl in his hand, a pear-shaped pearl and one, as he could see, of great value. It was a strange and startling thing to find in Vestal's room.

His blood beat in his brain like mad. For a moment he stood against the table for support, and at last, with the gem in his hand, he moved toward the window where he could get a better look at it.

"Can this be a part of the Wellington jewels?" he asked himself, and then he remembered that the newspaper description of the stolen gems mentioned some costly pearls.

And this one he had found in Vestal's room!

Was the girl guilty, after all? Had she deceived him with her protestations of innocence to make him believe that her heart was pure when it was black with the crime of theft?

"Mrs. Wellington will recognize the gem if it belonged to her," he said. "She shall tell me if this was one of her treasures."

Concealing the pearl about his person, he slipped from the house and took a car for Billion avenue.

Eudora Wellington's mansion was known to every one. It loomed in all its stateliness between him and the sky and in a little while he was at the door.

It opened to him and the servant who peered into his face seemed on the eve of shutting him out when he pushed into the hall.

"Your mistress," said Paul. "Tell her that Paul Partland is here on business connected with the loss of her jewels."

"Have you found them?"

"That is none of your businenss. I am here to see Mrs. Wellington, not one of her help."

In a minute Paul was ushered into the sumptuous parlor and soon found himself face to face with the millionaire mistress of the house.

She came forward with scrutinizing look, adjusting her gold-rimmed glasses for that purpose and Paul stood the inspection very well.

"You want to see me, do you?" said the woman in her raucous tones. "Betty said it is about the gems."

"I have come to ask you a question or two about something I will exhibit," and Paul felt the little packet in his pocket.

"Very well, but you must know that I will not compromise with the female thief."

"You have not been asked to compromise with any one, madame. As to the guilt or innocence of the person charged with the theft of the gems, that is another matter just now."

With this Paul proceeded to take the pearl from his pocket and the woman watched him like a hawk.

She uttered a cry when he held it up before her gaze.

"Where did you get it?"

"It is yours, then? You recognize it?"

"To be sure I do. There were just two such gems in my collection and that is one of them."

"Be sure of it."

"I am. Don't I know my own property?"

"You should."

"Where did you get it, I say? Did the girl——"

"The person who took the jewel did not give it back to me."

"Are you a detective?"

"I am just common Paul Partland."

"An amateur, no doubt."

"You may call me that if you care to for I have sworn to discover who took your jewels."

"Then I hope there is some chance of having the brazen hussy brought to the bar of justice."

Paul's face went white to hear this epithet applied to Vestal, but he beat his indignation down.

"You haven't told me where you found the pearl," persisted Mrs. Wellington.

"I don't see that I have to tell," said Paul.

"But don't you see it would be a great clue?"

"Perhaps. Since you have recognized the gem I have nothing more to say at present."

The woman's countenance fell.

"You have no right to keep back the secret you are withholding. It may defeat justice."

"I'll take care of that," said Paul. "The gem is yours, Mrs. Wellington," and with this he drew toward the door.

"The girl will not be lost long to the hounds of justice," the woman exclaimed. "I have this day set a new sleuth on the track."

"Indeed?"

"At the suggestion of my friend, Mr. Vanderbeck, this new detective has come into the case——"

"Pardon me, madame. Mr. Vanderbeck had the jewels in his keeping when they turned up missing?"

"Yes, and the girl knew the combination of the safe that held them."

"I believe that is the prevailing story."

"It is the true one. Knowing the combination and being tempted, she took the jewels. I wonder if you didn't find this one where she dropped it?"

Paul did not speak.

"What is your honest opinion?" he asked at last.

"About the theft of the gems?"

"Yes."

"Why, the girl took them."

"Miss Vestal Cummings?"

"That's her name."

"She bore a good reputation before the charge, didn't she? Lloyd Vanderbeck fully trusted her?"

"Certainly. But you see the glitter of my gems——"

"Overcame her honest scruples? I see," and a faint smile gathered at Paul's mouth. "That's it. No one but the girl could have taken the jewels, I suppose. You have never looked beyond Vestal Cummings."

"There's no use doing so!" exclaimed Mrs. Wellington. "She is the guilty one!"

"You have never thought that possibly you may be accusing an innocent person."

"I never have, for she is the pretty thief."

"Very well; we'll let it rest there for the present," said Paul as he laid his hand on the knob.

"But where did you find the pearl? You haven't answered that question."

"No, and at present I do not intend to answer it," and Paul's lips seemed to snap behind the last words.

Mrs. Wellington's face grew more florid than ever.

"We may make you tell!" she hissed.

"We?"

"The police and I."

"You may if you can," laughed Paul, and the next minute he was on the street with the millionairess stifling with rage at the window.

CHAPTER VI.

A HIDDEN FACE.

"Fill up again, boys! This is the best of the vintage and we won't get any better when we get down in the land of the Montezumas."

The speaker, a fine looking young man, sat at a little table in one of the private drinking rooms of the great city. He had for companions two young persons of his own age.

Nearly everybody about town knew Park Knowles.

He was the black sheep of a well known family that had about discarded him, but he seemed always supplied with money which was supposed to come from the family coffers.

The three drank to their success in Mexico whither they expected to go in a few days and the room rang with the clinking of the delicate glasses.

"I say, Park, old boy, that was a cool theft of Eudora Wellington's stones."

"About the slickest thing done in a long time, and the joke of the whole thing is that it was pulled off by a young girl. Who would have thought that a kid girl could have planned and carried out such a bold bit of business?"

"She had help, I say," put in the third man at the table.

Park Knowles was silent.

"What do you think, Park?"

"It's none of my business. I know that."

"But you have been to old Vanderbeck's office and must have had squint at the girl."

"Yes," admitted Knowles, "I have been there and have seen the girl."

"Was she pretty?"

"Passably so," and Knowles drained his glass.

"What, think you, she's ever done with the swag?"

"Planted it, of course," said the third man. "You don't expect her to walk the street with the whole blooming lot on her person?"

"Of course not. But I'd like to have stood in with the girl."

"And go up the river for the deed?"

By this time the wine had run out and the three made ready to leave.

"When shall we start, Park?" asked one.

"The first of next week."

"You will have to see to the funds, for Blake for I haven't enough to buy a tortilla in the land of the Montezumas."

"I'll attend to that," smiled Knowles. "Now let us go. No, wait a moment. See that man who has just strolled in?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's Vanderbeck."

"Not the man who lost the gems for Mrs. Wellington?"

"The same old bloke."

"Going to drown his sorrows in the flowing bowl?"

"I shouldn't be surprised."

The newcomer, who was really Lloyd Vanderbeck, quietly took a seat at one of the adjoining tables and the trio heard him give his order.

"I'll have a word with him before we go. We bank at his establishment," said Park Knowles.

Thereupon he arose and crossed the room to the table occupied by the man from Gold street.

Vanderbeck recognized the younger man with a friendly nod and invited him to a seat at his table.

"I am here with friends and we are just going," answered Park. "I thought I would drop over and inquire after progress."

"Oh, you refer to the missing gems?"

"Yes."

"Well, we are on the trail at last. It was thought that the girl had either left the city or made way with herself, but neither theory is correct."

"Good! You'll get her, then?"

"As sure as the sun rises on the bay tomorrow," said Vanderbeck with confidence, "and that is something you can bank on."

"Of course."

"I've heard rumors," pursued Vanderbeck, "that you contemplate shaking the city?"

"I may go some time. You see one leads a drowsy life situated as I am with no real business."

"They haven't cut down your allowance, have they?"

"No. They know better than do that," laughed Park. "I hope you'll find the jewels."

"Thanks. We will as soon as we locate the girl," and Vanderbeck turned to his wine.

Park Knowles rejoined his companions and the three slipped out.

"I'll tell you, Park," said one of the others. "I have always doubted that girl story."

"In what way, Gorley?"

"I doubt if she ever touched one of those gems."

"But why did she go and hide?"

"That's nothing against her. She may have been so humiliated that she had no heart to come forward and plead her innocence. You have had some experience with women."

Yes, Park Knowles had had a good deal.

"What do you think, Gorley?" he asked. "You've heard Vanderbeck's story?"

"Yes, and I set it down for about half a lie."

"You don't think that he robbed his dear friend Mrs. Wellington?"

"I don't say all, Knowles, that I think. It wouldn't be safe for me to do so in this city."

"But I know that Vanderbeck is innocent of that crime."

"You really know it, Park?"

"Yes——"

"How in the name of Heaven——"

"We'll not discuss this question," broke in Park Knowles. "I know that Vanderbeck never stole those jewels."

"Did the girl?"

"The papers say she did. Wasn't she there?"

"Yes, as the gold bug's secretary."

"And knew how to open the safe?"

"But what if the safe wasn't locked at that particular time? What if Vanderbeck unwittingly left it open——"

"You're too blamed inquisitive," broke in Knowles. "I won't discuss the question any longer. Here we are, at my corner. You'll be ready for the trip when I call on you?"

"All ready," responded Gorley and he and his companion separated from Knowles.

Half an hour later Park Knowles let himself into a handsome home on the avenue and went upstairs.

"Is that you, Park?" called out a girl's voice from a room on the first floor.

"What is it, sister?"

Knowles came downstairs and met a young and handsome girl in the lower hall.

"There's some one in the library waiting for you," said his sister in a startled whisper.

"For me? Why didn't you tell him——"

"It's a girl," was the interruption. "I couldn't see her face, for she wears a veil—"

"The devil she does!" cried Park. "I'll see about this."

He went toward the door of the library, but his face was almost ashen.

Lida drew back and beat a hasty retreat.

Young Knowles entered the room alone.

When he crossed the threshold he paused and looked at the person who rose at the same time and come toward him.

His visitor had a tall and well-trimmed figure, but her face was hidden by a veil which Park tried in vain to penetrate.

"What is it?" asked the young man. "To whom am I indebted for this late call?"

"Never mind. I have come to ask you confess the truth."

"About what?"

"About the stolen gems."

"The Wellington jewels, you mean?"

"Yes, yes! For the love of Heaven, Park Knowles——"

The speaker had raised her voice that sifted through the veil and Park sprang forward.

"No scene here, witch!" he cried as he threw up his hands. "I will not be blackmailed under my own roof. I——"

"But you know the truth. Oh, the horror of that burning lie——"

"You are mad," and the hand of Park Knowles seized the woman's arm. "Another word and I'll turn you over to the coroner!"

There was a cry from beyond the room and Park knew that it was his sister's voice.

CHAPTER VII.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

The veiled woman broke from the young man's grasp and retreated half-way across the room.

"You will not take this cloud from my sky?" she exclaimed. "Do you refuse to help me?"

"I know nothing."

"But you came to the office. You——"

"No more!" broke in Park Knowles. "I will not be badgered in this manner."

There was silence for a moment and then the sister on the stair heard the voice of the girl again.

"This terrible thing is killing me," she cried. "I cannot withstand it. Once I was terribly tempted and the river almost had me in its merciless clutches."

"So much the better for you," heartlessly hissed the young man.

Just then the door opened and Lida stood before the pair in the parlor.

She was a comely girl, was Park's sister. There was true sympathy in the depths of her radiant eyes and as she came forward the young blade gave her a withering glance.

"Park, this is infamous!" said Lida.

"You've been listening, then, sis?" said he. "I told you to go to your room."

Lida crossed over to where the veiled girl stood and took her arm with all the gentleness of her sex.

"You can get no satisfaction out of my brother tonight," she went on. "He is not disposed to help you, which I am sure he should do."

Park said nothing, but looked glaringly at his sister.

"I will force the truth from him one of these days," came through the veil. "He must tell the truth even though it hurts him. It must come out."

In another minute the young girl was at the door, gently guided by Lida whose arm enncircled her waist.

"You have suffered, I know you have," said Lida. "I pity you from the bottom of my heart. All will come out right in the end—I am sure of it."

"I hope so, but oh, the shame of it now!"

Lida Knowles led her charge to the door and kissed her through the veil on the step.

"I thank you," said the unknown. "I will never forget your kindness and I hope your brother will come to his reason and grant my demand."

With this the two young women parted, and after watching the flitting figure on the pavement, Lida turned back to seek her brother.

Park stood midway up the stair and was looking down upon her with a dark scowl.

"Well, minx, I suppose you are satisfied," he said.

Lida's face turned white, but she did not speak for a second.

"She needed help and you refused it," said she. "I know her not, but she is an honest girl"

"Honest!" and a coarse laugh broke over Park's lips. "If you knew what the papers are saying about her perhaps you would change your tune"

"The newspapers? About that young girl?"

"Sure."

"I cannot conceive what they would say about her that would be dishonorable."

"Because you do not know, sis. You read nothing but the fashion columns and therefore know nothing of current events."

"I read everything."

"Then," with another glare, "you may have heard of the theft of Mrs. Wellington's jewels."

"I have read much about that."

"A good deal, I dare say, yet not enough to enable you to know a thief when you see one."

"What do you mean?"

Park laughed again.

"Never mind," he said, "I'm going to bed," and with this he bounded up the steps and vanished.

Meanwhile the person who had just left the house was hurrying from shadow to shadow on the sidewalk.

Not long afterward she turned up in another part of the city and disappeared in the hallway of the house occupied by Madame Zenobia, the seeress.

Passing up the narrow stairs she opened a door and entered a room where she was confronted by the seeress herself, a handsome woman in the prime of life, but with the soft features and sloe-black eyes of those born in the Orient.

There she removed her veil and stood revealed as Vestal Cummings, the hunted girl.

Madame Zenobia watched her young charge a moment and then said in her deep, rich voice:

"Well, my dear, I hope you succeeded."

"No, I was repulsed with scorn."

"By the spawn of the rich?"

"By Park Knowles, and but for the gentle yet firm interference of his sister I might have been rudely handled."

"The wretch!" cried the fortune teller. "It is the way of the parvenu. One of these days a cloud will burst over the house of Knowles and all will end in irretrievable ruin."

"Not all!" cried Vestal. "Let his sister escape. She was my friend. She came in in the nick of time and I was rescued from violence as I verily believe."

"He utterly refused to speak, did he?"

"Yes. He called me a blackmailer and would have ejected me but for her."

"It is infamous!" and the face of Madame Zenobia grew white. "The cloud will soon burst over that house and when it does——"

She paused and did not finish the sentence.

"What shall I do now?" asked Vestal. "This silence is killing me. Paul must be nigh distracted and I cannot think of him without my heart almost dying in my bosom."

"What would you do, child?"

"Anything is better than this. I can go out and surrender myself. That would be infinitely better."

"And face the terrible charge?"

"Yes. I am innocent."

"I know that," said the seeress with softening voice. "But there is the publicity. You know what the papers have already said about you? You are guilty in the sight of the public. You are but a young girl and the world is against you."

"I know. But this suspense. This terrible racking of Paul's heart and all that. I will go and give myself up, hoping that even in this city with every one against me I may be able to stem the tide."

"No," responded the seeress firmly. "I will not see you stand in the prisoner's dock, not yet awhile."

"Then I must write to Paul."

"Not yet. They doubtless know by this time that he is your friend and they would track him to this house. A little while yet, child."

"It will be an eternity of torture!" cried Vestal.

The young girl went over to the window and looked down into the street.

All at once she turned and beckoned the other woman to her side.

"A spy?" queried Madame Zenobia as she came up.

"The man down yonder, the one half in shadow!" answered Vestal.

"I see," and Zenobia pulled the young girl back. "It is the spy of the police."

"And he has tracked me down?"

Her breath came fast and she fell back with a shudder that seemed to chill her whole being.

"He is gone," said Madame Zenobia, after a spell, and the following moment she thrust Vestal behind a curtain.

Footsteps came up the stair, a little bell tinkled above the door and then it opened.

Zenobia was as cool as one long practiced in the art of coolness and as her visitor crossed her threshold she watched him like a hawk.

The man was no less a person than Lloyd Vanderbeck for the rich were among the woman's most ardent patrons.

Zenobia waved her visitor to a seat and the following moment said in her usual tones:

"The stars are just right tonight. You have come to consult them?"

"No, not that," answered Vanderbeck. "I have come to enlist you in a little affair of my own."

Zenobia bowed and waited for him to proceed.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOME BLACK MAGIC.

A brief silence followed Vanderbeck's last words and then he spoke again, leaning forward, but first with a swift glance round the room to see if they were alone.

"I am here, Madame Zenobia, to enlist your help in a little matter which just at this time greatly affects me."

"I know," said the seeress. "The lady on Billion avenue."

Vanderbeck gave a quick start and looked away not a little nonplussed.

"It is useless to conceal from one who is in converse with the occult."

"I am simply Madame Zenobia, the seventh child of a seventh child," was the reply. "But proceed."

"You deal in potions?"

At this the seeress smiled and studied the face of her visitor for a minute.

"I deal in what is legitimate," she said. "I am no charlatan. What powers I have come to me honestly."

"Yes."

Vanderbeck passed his hand across his face.

"I cannot succeed in my present quest unless a mystery which now is the talk of the town is solved."

"Let us be plain," put in the woman. "You cannot win the hand of Eudora Wellington until you are able to place the stolen jewels in her lap."

"My God! You are a wonderful woman."

"I am the seventh child."

"I know. The accursed gems are still missing."

"So say the papers."

"It is a strange mystery. If they could but unearth the girl the whole thing might be as clear as day."

"She took the jewels, then?"

"She took them," said Vanderbeck with positiveness. "So far she has baffled the best secret service hounds in the city. It is marvelous."

"A young girl against the sleuths of the whole city? Where are their eyes?"

"Where they should not be, I guess. But let us get away from the bloodhounds for a minute. Without the restoration of the jewels I will fail."

"You mean that unless you can hand the gems over to their owner you will lose your suit?"

"That is it exactly."

"And you have come to me to point out the hiding place of the celebrated Wellington jewels?"

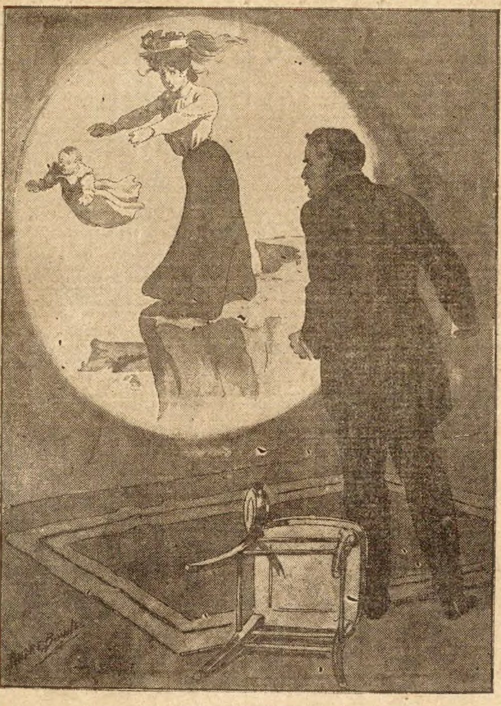
"You are all powerful in such matters. I have come to you for assistance. My purse is open to you."

A strange smile appeared for a second at Madame Zenobia's mouth.

"But the girl?" she said. "What are we to do with your late stenographer?"

"The fair purloiner, you mean?"

"Yes."



"My God!" he exclaimed.

"The law can deal with her. I want the jewels and justice can play her hand out against Vestal Cummings."

"I see," said the woman, dropping her head. "You are looking out for yourself first——"

"And all the time," finished Vanderbeck.

"Very well. We will see what the magic canvas shows."

"That's it!" cried Vanderbeck, rubbing his hands in anticipation. "It's a wonderful canvas you have. I have heard of it."

Madame Zenobia rose and crossed the room. She vanished in a moment and in a manner perplexing to her visitor. She seemed to dissolve against the wall and Vanderbeck found himself alone in the abode of the seeress.

The lights went lower and lower till the room seemed wrapped in mystic shadows. Lloyd Vanderbeck, a firm believer in black magic, remained in his chair with his face turned toward the wall where Zenobia had disappeared.

Slowly something appeared on the canvass which had been dropped along the wall. It was indistinct at first, but gradually took shape and at last resolved itself into a woman who stood on a cliff with a child in her arms.

Vanderbeck, who leaned forward with intense eagerness grew pallid and his hands closed like those of one in a spasm of terror.

Great beads of perspiration came out on his forehead and he almost gasped.

All at once the woman, who was young raised the child above her head and seemed about to hurl it from the cliff

Vanderbeck shrank back with a startling cry.

"My God!" he exclaimed, "what does the witch mean?"

In another second the occupant of the precipice flung the child from her and Vanderbeck recoiled with a terrible exclamation.

"To perdition with such accursed magic!" he gasped. "I did not ask for such a scene as that. Is Madame Zenobia mad?"

"Nay," came the reply from one unseen. "It is always the past that we would cover up."

"I will not witness any more magic like that," said Vanderbeck. "There is money on your table, Madame Zenobia. When you can treat your patrons civilly you will have them and no longer."

With this he sprang to his feet and looked once more at the canvas.

It was dark now. The woman and the cliff were gone and Vanderbeck remained silent in the middle of the room.

"Look once more, man born of woman," said the same sepulchral voice. "You seek the love of the woman on Billion avenue. Look and believe."

The banker held his breath and the next second the wall seemed to part.

"Well, it's to be no cliff this time," thought the millionaire.

"It is no cliff," said the voice as though his inmost thoughts had been read. "It is the end of life."

It seemed to the startled Vanderbeck that he faced a large apartment elegantly furnished.

Thick carpets of splendid patterns covered the floor and great paintings adorned the walls. It was the abode of some one blessed with untold wealth.

All at once a door opening into this chamber swayed toward Vanderbeck and he watched it closely.

"'Tis she!" he inwardly ejaculated. "By my soul, 'tis Eudora!"

Yes, the person who seemed to come forward was Eudora Wellington, the owner of the missing jewels.

The banker of Gold street gazed breathless at the beautiful apparition.

She swept forward to a great armchair and seated herself.

"Wonderful!" said Vanderbeck to himself as he gazed.

"This is the prize you strive for," said the voice of the unseen.

"It is."

Just then, a door opened and Eudora Wellington turned her head.

Across the carpet glided a man over one-half of whose face lay a darkish mask.

His actions were sinister in the extreme and Vanderbeck as he gazed held his breath.

"The wretch will slay her!" he cried, leaping to his feet. "She must be saved!"

"Fool!" said the voice from where he did not know. "It is fate."

"Witch!" said Vanderbeck. "To Tartarus with your infernal black art. It is false!"

"Then go out and succeed if you can."

"I will! I will find the girl and the jewels. I will place the gems in their owner's lap without the help of your art, Madame Zenobia. You will find your fee on the table."

The room became dark again.

The door opened and shut and Vanderbeck was gone as suddenly as he had come.

"The fool!" said the voice of Madame Zenobia as she reappeared in the chamber of magic. "The silly fool believes not, but the truth of the future will convince him."

With this she spoke the name of Vestal, but no one appeared at her bidding.

In another minute the seeress went to the crimson curtain behind which she had secreted Vestal and drew it aside.

A little cry escaped her lips and then she hastily stooped over the figure that lay at her feet.

It was the figure of Vestal, the accused, and her face was as ashen as a burial shroud.

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A Question of Interest to All Careful Persons.

Arguments on food are interesting. Many persons adopt a vegetarian diet on the ground that they do not like to feel that life has been taken to feed them, nor do they fancy the thought of eating dead meat.

On the other hand too great consumption of partly cooked, starchy oats and wheat or white bread, pastry, etc., produces serious bowel troubles, because the bowel digestive organs (where starch is digested) are overtaxed and the food ferments, producing gas, and microbes generate in the decayed food, frequently bringing on peritonitis and appendicitis.

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A remarkable result in nourishment is obtained; the person using Grape-Nuts gains quickly in physical and mental strength. Why in mental? Because the food contains delicate particles of Phosphate of Potash obtained from the grains, and this unites with the albumen of all food and the combination is what nature uses to rebuild worn out cells in the brain. This is a scientific fact that can be easily proven by ten days' use of Grape-Nuts. "There's a Reason." Read "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs.

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A verdant-looking old fellow recently entered the office of a downtown woman's exchange, and after a moment's hesitation inquired of the lady in charge, "Is this here the Woman's Exchange?"

"It is," replied the lady.

"Well," continued the countryman, somewhat sheepishly, "I'd like to swap off my old woman fer 'most anybody you happen to have on hand."

A Dainty Little Maid.

Every one ought to have her. She is dressed in pretty colors and changes the color of her skirt herself when it is going to rain. She indicates when it is wise to take an umbrella or when you can do without. She is the simplest and best of barometers. She is an ornament, a good seller for agents, a pretty gift, a good business souvenir and useful to any one. She or one of her sisters comes postpaid with full directions for only 10 cents. W. P. Randolph & Co., 78 Dearborn St., Chicago.

Chance to Kneel.

The impecunious nobleman twisted his raven mustache.

"I come to ze great land to be one gallant," he confided.

"That so?" responded his American acquaintance.

"Yes, I will kneel before the bootiful ladies of ze land."

"Indeed! Well, I think I can help you, Count."

"You think that you can help me, monsieur? How?"

"Why, I happen to remember the street where I saw the sign: 'Shoe clerk wanted.'"

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35 YEARS OLD.

Published Every Saturday
—BY—
W. D. BOYCE CO.

All communications should be addressed to
THE CHICAGO LEDGER,
112, 114 DEARBORN ST.,
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES.

Single subscriptions to the Chicago Ledger by mail $1,00 a year, 60 cents for six months, in advance. If not paid in advance, $2.00 a year, $1.00 for six months. Remittances should be made by Bank Draft, Registered Letter, Postoffice or Express Money Order, payable to The Chicago Ledger. Subscription price in Canada. $1.50 a year.

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A misfit bargain isn't fit for anything.

July is taking hold as if it liked the job.

Marriage is either an earthly Heaven or it isn't.

A real good man doesn't have to use words to tell it.

If you would learn of a man's good deeds attend his funeral.

Many a man gives up a bad habit—after he gets tired of it.

Even the milk of human kindness isn't always adulterated.

It takes a lot of good luck to enable some men to reach the top.

That red-headed planet, Mars, is trying its best to be sociable.

Any coward can get married, but it takes a hero to stay married.

An actress may blaze with diamonds and not set the world on fire.

Marriage isn't always a failure; there is usually a fighting chance.

Neuralgia and rheumatism come under the head of sharpshooters.

Matrimonially speaking, where there's a will there's usually a won't.

Loans sharks are anxious to meet people who want to borrow trouble.

The bleached blonde's method of keeping her hair light is a dark secret.

Don't be stingy with kind words; they are worth a lot more than they cost.

Did you ever know a man to practice half the things he preaches to his boy?

Going to a summer resort and getting drowned is carrying the thing too far.

A promoter is a man who makes a strenuous effort to boost his own interests.

Instead of counting the cost of experience consider what it is worth to you.

Our idea of a brave woman is one who isn't afraid to talk back to the cook.

Even in this land of the free no man has the right to take unwarranted liberties.

It's easier for a girl to forgive a young man for kissing her than for not doing it.

We don't know, Cordelia, but doubtless Mother Nature and Father Time are twins.

Iron has gone down in price. Now is the time to lay in your winter supply of iron.

How dear everything is when you want to buy, and how cheap when you want to sell!

Attempt to follow the advice of all your alleged friends and it will be a padded cell for you.

THE EARL'S LOVE;

A CANADIAN IDYL.

By Granville Osborne.

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Begun in No. 28, July 13.— Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER VII.

Charles took a fleeting glance at an opposite mirror, but the sight of his white hair and gaunt face seemed to satisfy him.

"I should hardly recognize myself," he reflected hoarsely, and then he pulled his strength together with a mighty effort, for the moment had come which he had counted on and lived for, the moment when he and Snowflake should meet each other once again. And how strikingly different was the reality from the anticipation.

Lord Lasnorth crossed the room in search of him.

"Come along at once and be introduced," he said in his boyish way. "I have told her all about you, and she is so anxious to know you," and Charles found himself being piloted across the crowded room, the cynosure of every eye, until he stood in front of the beautiful girl at the far end.

"Here he is, Hope!" cried Devon. "Let me introduce one of my best friends. Mr. Sutherland—Miss Charteris."

The blue eyes raised themselves at once. They traveled quickly over the thin, bent figure and up to the gaunt face, and there they paused and stopped with a smile in their lovely depths.

"I am so glad," she began, and then suddenly stopped, while the smile turned into a horrified, stricken stare, and her face grew to a whiteness which matched the man's. For, however much he had altered and however much his comeliness was a thing of the past, the child he had loved to madness had pierced the change. And it was in such wise that they met again!

Lord Lasnorth, standing by in jealous watchfulness, was on the alert in a moment at the change of color.

"You are cold," he said with much anxious concern.

"Come closer to the fire and warm yourself."

She shook her head, and Melancholy Jim, who was standing close by, laughed at the suggestion.

"She ought to be able to stand English weather after having lived through a Canadian winter," he said. "Lord Lasnorth tells me you also have spent several years under the Dominion Government, Mr. Sutherland. You and I and my other friends"—with a wave of his hand towards Globe-Trotting John and Sunny Hal—"ought to have much in common, then, for we have all lived the best years of our lives in snowland."

Charles looked from one to the other of the three men with half-shut eyes, but their faces showed no signs of recognition. Whatever peril he stood in with Snowflake, at least he was safe as far as the rest were concerned.

"I have large interests still in Canada," he said, glad of any interruption which would give the girl time to regain her self-possession, and he forthwith entered into a lengthy discourse about his silver mine, which lasted until the gong boomed out the call to dinner.

Then he went up to her and held out his arm. "I hear I am to take you in," he said, in a studied, lifeless voice which gave little evidence of the state of mind within, and he never spoke another word until they reached the dining-room and sat down at the long table with its wealth of plate and hothouse flowers.

It was Lord Lasnorth who next ruffled the outward peace of the community.

"Have you ever been to Cascade City, Sutherland?" he asked, looking across at Snowflake, who was sitting at his left, "because my future wife comes from there and will be delighted to meet any one who knew her old home."

"His future wife's face" did not seem to endorse his words, and to his disappointment she kept her eyes on her plate and made no response.

"It is some little time since I went to Cascade City," replied Charles evasively, "and it was quite a little place at that time."

"I expect it has grown hugely since we left it three years ago," put in Sunny Hal, who was sitting a little farther down the table, "for it is the finest ranching region in the world."

"How do you like England in comparison, Miss Charteris?" asked Charles, deftly turning the subject and bringing it round to the all-important topic of the hour. "I hear you are to spend the rest of your days in this lovely old place. May I as an old friend of—of your future husband's, give you my best wishes?"

The girl raised her eyes with an effort, but they did not get as far as his face.

"Thank you," she said in a strained voice, which did not seem able to utter more than the two words.

"She ought to count herself fortunate, ought she not, Mr. Sutherland?" said Melancholy Jim, "for Lasnorth Castle is one of the loveliest places in England. I went down to the village today"—turning towards his host as he spoke—"and was much interested in hearing the old legend of the castle from one of the pensioners in the almshouse."

Lord Lasnorth drew his brows together slightly.

"The villagers are very superstitious," he remarked.

"Is there really a legend about the place?" asked his fiancee, welcoming any change of conversation from Cascade City or her approaching marriage. "You never told me so before."

"No," he replied, with evident reluctance, "because it is one of those stories which must have originated in the ignorance of the middle ages."

"But I should like to hear it all the same," with pretty persistence. "Do tell it to me, please!"

"Ah, Miss Charteris," interposed Charles quickly, "you are imbued with the same characteristics as our first mother. Take care your curiosity does not turn you also out of Eden."

Her long lashes flickered a little.

"You make me all the more curious to hear it now," she said, with an attempt at a smile. "As the castle is to be my future home"—with a swift look at Lord Lasnorth—"I certainly think I ought to hear its legend."

"It is nothing very much," he replied, trying to meet the inevitable with a brave face, and knowing full well that the tale was certain to reach her sooner or later in a garbled version. "It is just that one of the old lords of Lasnorth was so jealous of his wife that he shut her up in the top room of the nest tower, where she died of a broken heart, and the villagers will have it that every now and then she appears at the window in her ghostly form and cries out for succor. It isn't a very thrilling legend, after all."

"But you haven't said what the appearance of the ghost portends," interposed tactless Jim, living up to his old name, as usual, and making the most of a melancholy tale. "That is where the important part of the lengend comes in."

Lord Lasnorth frowned at the question, and made no response to Hope's questioning eyes.

"Do let me hear the rest," she pleaded. "If not, I shall think it is something very gruesome, and never dare go near the tower at all."

He threw back his head and tried to carry off the situation with an amused disdain.

"The appearance of the weird lady is supposed to foretell the death of the reigning lord," he said, with a smile. "The villagers call it a curse, and say it is just her revenge on the descendants of the man who treated her so shamefully."

Hope Charteris opened her eyes widely.

"Has it ever come to pass?" she asked in a scared voice. "I mean, has it ever so happened that an Earl of Lasnorth has died after the ghost has appeared."

"There will be many to tell you so," he replied with assumed mockery.

"But has it ever come to your knowledge?" she went on, with that persistence which will know the worst at all costs. "Have you ever seen or heard the ghost yourself?"

He wrestled with his love of truth, and then he turned towards her with a face strangely set and strained.

"Yes," he said shortly, "I have."

Her lips fell apart with stricken dismay. "And when?"

For the second time he paused while the rest of the table ceased their chatter to listen in breathless eagerness.

"Just before my father died, four years ago," he replied at last.

Hope leaned back in her chair. As Charles had predicted, she had eaten of the tree of knowledge to her own cost.

"And do you mean to say," she went on hoarsely, "that—that if I ever hear or see it, too, I must take it as a warning that your end is near?"

The words betrayed something more than fear. They spoke of a love which was the pith and marrow of her whole being, and as he heard them the man who had taken her into dinner clenched his hands beneath the table and set his teeth together with an iron constraint.

Lord Lasnorth gave her back no answer, for, in spite of his assumed contempt for the tale, he was not one to bring comfort at the expense of a lie.

It was Charles Sutherland who finally broke the painful silence and came to her aid.

"One swallow does not make a summer, Miss Charteris," he said severely, "and one coincidence of the ghost's appearance does not imply that it will occur again. As you have gone so far, why not inquire a little farther into the matter and ask Lord Lasnorth whether the same thing occurred when his elder brother died?"

Her future husband seized hold of the suggestion as a drowning man catches at a straw.

"No, indeed, it didn't!" he replied, with renewed cheerfulness, "and that just proves the nonsense of the whole idea. Carrington passed away without any warning, and not even the superstitious villagers could invent one."

The girl shivered a little.

"I hope I shall never hear it, all the same," she said pitifully.

"What a foolish child you are," remarked Jim, realizing too late the harm he had done. "You had better ask Devon to scale the nest tower at once, for the legend has it that if the reigning lord would ever be found brave enough to answer the cry for help by such an act of courage he would allay the course, and the ghostly spirit would get her rest at last."

The girl shivered again.

"I hope he won't do anything of the kind," she said miserably, "for that would be a certain way of fulfilling the horrible warning. Why, no man could scale that tower and live to tell the tale."

"My dear brother Carrington used to attempt it," said Lord Lasnorth, in that grave tone of voice in which the dead are usually referred to. "He was very anxious as a boy to break the spell and get rid of the ghost. He often tried to climb up by the ivy and reach the turret window in that way."

"And did he ever succeed?" It was Charles who asked the question.

"Not quite, but nearly. He got more than three-quarters of the distance once, but was not tall enough to stretch out his hand to the window-sill. The next attempt resulted in a broken leg, I believe, and then my father forbade him ever to try it again. But all this happened when I was quite a tiny child, for Carrington was many years older than I, and had left England before I remember anything more of him than a hazy outline.'

"But would it not do just as well if the poor ghost were rescued from the inside staircase?" said Hope, clinging to the tale with the nervous dread of one who has a personal interest in it.

Lord Lasnorth shook his head.

"That would not be possible," he said "for one of my ancestors had the room walled up to prevent the ghost being personated as a practical joke. So no one has been inside it for more than a century, except the owls who get in through the turret slits, and are probably the originators of the cry."

"There, Miss Charteris," said Charles soothingly. "Surely that will calm your fears. You must try and forget the legend altogether."

She raised her eyes, and for the first time they met his in a straight, clear glance.

"I wish," she replied brokenly—"oh, I wish I could, I could forget so easily!"

CHAPTER VIII.

Charles went straight up to Hope when the men joined the ladies in the drawing room after dinner.

"I hear they are going to dance," he said. "May I have one—for old sake's sake?"

She hesitated, not with reluctance to grant his request, but with the memories this same request recalled.

"They are nearly all promised," she said at last, "but I have one just before the end. Will you have that?"

"Half a loaf is better than no bread to a starving man," he quoted, trying not to compare the present times with the past. "So I must just take what I can get," and then he fell behind and let the crowd of other men surge round her, as he had so often seen them do in the days gone by.

The only difference lay in the surroundings—but what a difference. Instead of the whitewashed barn, with its decorations of turkey-red and spruce tree branches, was the long and beautiful ball-room of Lasnorth with its myriads of electric lights hanging against the walls and shining on the floor of polished oak.

Snowflake's appearance was altered, too, for in place of the little home-made frock she had worn at St. Valentine's ball was one of gleaming white satin and priceless lace, while round her neck was a row of pearls worth a king's ransom, which had been one of Lord Lasnorth's first gifts after his engagement. And Charles almost laughed with bitterness as he thought of the little cheap gown he had himself provided, and which had given so much pleasure at the time.

It was hard work waiting for the promised dance, but it came at last, and his heart beat almost to suffocation as he put his arm round her and led her into the whirling, dancing throng.

Round and round they went in a silence more significant than any words. The steps which they had first learned to dance together seemed to meet again in the old harmonious movement which had always singled them out as the smartest couple in the room, and which, even among men and women of the Old Country, drew the eyes of others towards them in unanimous admiration.

Charles seemed to gain fresh life and strength in that dance, but it came to an end at last, and then he took her into the great conservatory which opened out of the ball-room and found a secluded seat for her at the far end.

It was with almost a wail that he broke the long silence.

"Where have you hidden yourself all this long time?" he asked.

She bent her eyes on some arum lilies, showing pure and white against their dark green leaves.

"I have been here most of the time," she explained. "Mr. and Mrs. Charteris adopted me a fortnight or three weeks after—after you went away, and the others sold the ranch and came to England. Jim is Mr. Charteris' land agent. He says he has never had a better, and Sunny Hal is Sir Jardine, through the unexpected death of an uncle and cousin. He has a nice little place in Norfolk, and has settled down; but the third is Globe-Trotting John still, and will never be otherwise."

He listened to her with a stricken face and then he broke the pause again.

"I have been searching the world for you," he said, "and I have found you too late!"

She wrung her hands together in piteous entreaty.

"Oh!" she said, "I have been striving all these years to wipe out the past. Why bring it all back again? Why refer to things which can only cause us both pain? I was only a child at the time, and did not understand, but now I see things with different eyes and realize the grief of them to the utmost intensity. If you are merciful, never speak of them."

"You were so good to me in the far back days," she pleaded brokenly. "Be good once more and think of me only as the child you played with and taught to ride and drive and dance. Forget the later time when a great mistake turned me into a woman. Forget the one dread day which makes me shrink and cower when I remember it. They told me you were dead, and I never thought to see you again. Have you come back to separate me from the man I love?"

"I have come back to ask your forgiveness," he said in lifeless tones. "When I have that I will go away and never trouble you again."

"You have it—you have it freely," she replied breathlessly. "I bear no thought of anger or malice against you now. Only do not rob me of my present happiness—do not tell my future husband of that blot in my past."

"Tell him yourself, child," he said huskily. "It is no use beginning a new life without perfect confidence between you."

"I dare not," she replied with a dry sob. "I dare not risk it. He was brought up so differently from me. He would never understand."

"Is he so stern and hard, then—or so perfect himself that he will be ready with the first stone? Ah, Snowflake—for the sake of what has gone before—do as I ask you. No harm ever came yet of doing right!"

She crushed her hand against her eyes, and as they stood there together, a man's quick footstep sounded on the tesselated pavement close at hand. A moment later and Lord Lasnorth himself turned the corner of the connservatory and came straight to the palm grove which sheltered them from outside view.

He looked at them wonderingly; at the man waiting in stony despair, a little to the left, and then at the girl with her anguished face, and the traces of tears on her white cheeks.

And before he could speak a word, Charles Sutherland turned on his heel and disappeared.

"What is the matter?" asked Lord Lasnorth in astonished tones. "What has he been saying to make you cry?"

The girl drew a long, deep breath, then she took her courage in both hands.

"He has been telling me my duty," she said in a stifled voice. "He has been showing me what a grievous wrong I had intended doing you."

"A wrong?" he repeated; when you are just going to make me honored above all other men."

"Oh!" she cried, wrenching her hand away and placing it with the other across her face. "You must not think too much of me, for there is something in my past I ought to have told you—something I have hidden all these years for very shame. Let me tell you now—now, while I have the strength and courage."

He waited for a moment in a wondering silence, and then she began in feverish haste:

"You knew what my childhood was," she said, "how it was spent in the wilds of Canada among the men who picked me up out of the snow? You thought there were only three, but there was another you never heard of, who fell in love with me and I with him. Ah, forgive me—I was only a child then, and knew not the real meaning of the word. It was more fascination than anything else, and when he asked me, I left the ranch and ran away with him in the cold hours of a February morning. And all the time he was a married man. But the others found it out and followed us and brought us back the same day. They would have killed him in their anger, I think, if I had not begged for mercy; so at my request they let him go and turned him out of the homestead adrift by himself.

"You know the rest; how Mr. and Mrs. Charteris came to stop at Cascade City and offered to adopt me, and how my three faithful friends gave me up to them for my own good. Ah, do not judge me too harshly. Remember my youth and my bringing up. I had never been taught to love and fear God. I knew nothing of the Divine Love which redeemed mankind."

Lord Lasnorth gripped his hands together, for he remembered something else besides the things she wished him to.

"Are you sure," he asked in a hoarse voice, "that—that the old, old love is quite dead—that the new one fills up your heart alone?"

"As sure as I see you standing before me," she replied piteously. "As sure as I hope for God's forgiveness for the past, as well as yours."

"My beloved!" he said, "you were more sinned against than sinning."

She looked up into his face with tear-drenched eyes, hardly believing the evidence of her own ears.

"Your beloved—still!" she whispered, as his arms closed round her.

CHAPTER IX.

Mr. and Mrs. Charteris, with their adopted daughter and her three old friends, were the last to leave, and it was striking twelve when the big omnibus drove up to the castle door to take them home.

The departing guests, with their host and various men servants, made quite a little crowd on the entrance steps, but they were so engaged with making future arrangements and talking over the last details about the coming wedding, that they never noticed Charles Sutherland's spare figure standing in the shadow of the pillars and waiting for one last look at the face of the girl he loved.

Mr. and Mrs. Charteris shook hands with their host, and the three men followed suit, but Hope dallied for just one last moment on the doorsteps to say a special word or two to her future husband.

"Good-by, my darling," he whispered, looking deeply down into her blue eyes. "In another week we shall be together, and then it need not be good-by any more."

She smiled up into his face and was on the point of saying something in response, but before the words could leave her lips, a strange weird cry suddenly broke the stillness and echoed away into the silence of the night.

The girl turned her head.

"What was that?" she asked quickly.

"Only an owl, I think," said her fiance, with an awkward hesitation in his voice which he tried to smother.

She did not answer. She just put her hand up in a trusting attitude, and presently the cry came again—a low, agonized sound as if some one was in imminent peril and calling out for succor—a cry which froze the blood in the girl's veins and found its echo on her lips.

"Look!" she called pantingly, pointing with a shaking hand to the turret window. "Look!"

They all turned in the direction of the nest wing, the timid lady in the carriage and the husband on the point of entering, the three tall men standing on the gravel drive and the reigning Lord of Lasnorth on the doorstep, and they all saw the white eerie figure in the narrow window, and the ghostly arm outstretched for succor.

The girl's hands dropped to her sides and she swayed against the pillars of the castle porch.

"Oh!" she cried in a voice of terrified anguish. "It is the warning—the death-call!"

Lord Lasnorth put his strong arm round her. "Nonsense, dear," he said in a voice which struggled to be calm and steady. "It is only the moonlight playing on the stone wall. That wretched legend has made you fancy things."

"Is that fancy?" she cried hoarsely, pointing a second time at the white figure still showing in the glassless window.

"Is that imagination? You can see it, and I see it—and all the others can see it, too."

"But it need not be a ghost if we can," he replied, trying to give a comfort he did not feel. "It may be just something caught in the ivy. See"—suddenly letting his arms fall away from her trembling figure—"I will scale the turret and find out. It will calm your fears and allay the curse."

She caught hold of him with feverish strength.

"No, no!" she cried desperately. "I can't let you—I won't let you. It would mean certain death. Ah! I love you—I love you! Stay with me here, I beseech you—I entreat you."

The wild prayer echoed out into the still night, smiting the heart of the man in the shadow.

"I will allay the curse for you," he cried. "I will scale the walls and set your mind at rest."

And before they could put out a hand to stop him, he had rushed on to the marble terrace and placed his foot on the clinging fastness of the ivy.

They went after him and called to him, but it was no use, for before they could ever reach the terrace he was half-way on his desperate journey, and feeling his way inch by inch up the creepered walls. Now he was close to the second story, and a few moments later had touched the third, and all the while they stood in stricken watchfulness on the gravel drive holding their breath in terror and in agonized suspense.

Hope covered her face with her hands, for her limit of endurance had been reached. She told herself she could not watch the descending drop and downward journey, and she almost shrieked aloud at the tension of her agony, and the awful weight of the mental strain.

But it came to an end at last. There was a shout of triumph and a rush of tramping feet, and then with staggering limbs and cut and bleeding hands, Charles Sutherland came towards her with a rustling white thing in his shaking grasp.

"Here is the ghost," he cried breathlessly. "It was just the wall paper loosened by the damp and fluttering out of the window in the night breeze, and the place inside is a mass of bats and owls and other birds, which have built their nests in the turret and undoubtedly made the ghostly cry. So you need not fear the warning any more—for I——"

He broke off suddenly with an awful burst of coughing which shook his whole frame, and seemed to strangle his strength in the force of the paroxysm. There was a moment of struggling breath and panting helplessness, and then he fell forward at Hope's feet with a dark stream issuing from his nose and lips.

"The strain of the climb had broken a blood vessel," cried Lord Lasnorth hoarsely. "Send off the groom in the motor for a doctor at once."

He strode forward to raise the lifeless figure, but he was not quick enough, for Snowflake was before him, kneeling down in her satin gown on the gravel drive and lifting the gray face against her own.

"Come away," said Melancholy Jim, striving to lift her as he spoke. "Leave him to us, child, and go indoors."

But she waved him off imperiously. "I can't leave him," she called in a stricken voice. "He gave his life for my peace of mind and shall I desert him in his hour of need? Don't you see how it is—don't you know him?"

Melancholy Jim looked closer, scanning the changed face with wide open eyes, and then he fell back between his two old comrades.

"Merciful Heaven!" he cried. "It is Secret Charles!"

* * * * * * * * *

They carried him into the castle, and the doctor came, but with no avail, for the fiat had gone forth that his hour had come, and in less than an hour Secret Charles would no longer be numbered among the living.

Hope Charteris listened to the verdict with a face of stone. At that moment all her powers of suffering seemed to be dried up and withered, but they soon revived again when Lord Lasnorth took her into the sick-room, to say a last good-by to the friend of her youth.

Charles opened his eyes as he saw her, and a faint smile flitted across his white lips.

"I knew you would come," he said, "I knew you would never leave me to take this last great journey without wishing me God-speed, my Snowflake!"

Lord Lasnorth turned his head away at the old, endearing name, but the girl herself dropped on her knees and buried her face on her arms. "Ah, Charles!" she wailed, "you have given your life for my sake!"

His fingers wandered to her golden hair, "No, dear!" he said. "The climb only hastened the end; it did not cause it. I knew it must come well enough a year ago, and I knew it better when I heard the death-cry from the turret window. Ah, Devon—Devon!"—raising himself on his pillow and stretching out an entreating arm—"Don't you know me?—don't you recognize your long-lost brother? The warning came for me—not you."

Lord Lasnorth turned his head with a short, sharp cry. In that great, dread moment his eyes were opened to many things for whereas he had been blind, now he saw.

"You are Carrington," he said. "Carrington Garnier!"

The other nodded.

"Yes," he whispered. "I am the brother who sinned in his youth and forfeited his birthright, and you will need not fear the warning any more, for the reigning Lord himself has broken the spell and given the poor wandering spirit rest at last. Good-by and God bless you both. God in Heaven, bless my old comrades, too."

There was a moment's awful silence and then Jim put his hand on the girl's arm, for on the threshold of the room the great dread angel was standing with his sword unsheathed.

Secret Charles had made full reparation to the girl he loved at last.

* * * * * * * * *

A month later a very quiet wedding took place in the little village church, and as the bride and bridegroom walked down the path to the lych gate they halted for a moment by the great marble cross of the Lasnorth's, which bore a new name on its white surface, and told the passersby that Charles Carrington Garnier, tenth Earl of Lasnorth, had passed to his rest on the 7th day of February, 1905.

"God give him the peace which passeth all understanding," whispered Devon to his beautiful bride, and the three old comrades behind added, "Amen."

(The end.)

A Man-Eating Wolf.

It is generally supposed that the big timber wolf of America amounts to little as a killer of men when compared with his Siberian cousin, but this is not entirely true. Arthur Heming, the author and illustrator of "Spirit Lake," who has lived much with the fur-hunters of the Canadian Northwest, tells the following story as an illustration of this fact:

Several winters ago an old Dog-rib Indian, named Pot-fighter's-father, was trapping near Fort Rae on Great Slave Lake. Being in need of meat, he set out to hunt caribou. Although he had said that he would return to camp that night, on the third day after his departure he was still missing. His family became alarmed, and notified some neighboring hunters, who set out to trail the old man. After following his tracks for half a day, they came suddenly upon the footprintes of an unusually large wolf which had turned to trail the hunter. For some miles the brute had evidently followed close beside the trail of Pot-fighter's-father, diverging at times as though seeking cover, and then again stalking its prey in the open. One Indian continued to follow the old man's trail, while the other followed that of the wolf. The great size of the wolf's tracks filled the Indians with anxiety for the safety of their friend, and they hurried on as quickly as possible.

They had not gone far before they discovered that Pot-fighter's-father had come upon a herd of caribou, and a little further on they found lying on the snow a couple of caribou carcasses that he had shot. Strange to say, the animals had not been skinned, nor had their tongues been removed. More remarkable still, the wolf—although passing close to them—had not stopped to feed. The Indians now vividly realized their friend's danger, and hurried on all the faster. Soon they came upon another dead caribou, and this time Pot-fighter's-father had skinned it, and had cut out its tongue, but again the wolf had refused to touch the deer. Continuing their pursuit, they discovered a brush wind-break where the hunter had evidently stopped to camp for the night. Now they noticed that the tracks of the wolf took to cover among the scrub. Approaching the shelter, they read in the snow the signs of a terrible struggle between a man and a wolf.

The hunter's gun, snowshoes and sash containing his knife, rested against the wind-break, and his axe stood in the snow where he had been cutting brush. To the Indians the snow was like an open book. From it they read the story of the long-drawn fight.

Here the snow told how the great wolf had leaped upon the back of the unsuspecting man while he was carrying an armful of brush, and had knocked him down. There it showed that the man had grappled with the brute and rolled it over upon its back. Here the signs showed where the wolf had broken free; there, where it had attacked again; here, where the two had grappled again and in their struggle had rolled over and over. The snow was now strewn with wolf-hair and dyed with blood. While the dreadful encounter raged, the battle-ground had kept steadily shifting nearer to the gun. Just a couple of yards away from it lay the frozen body of poor old Pot-fighter's-father. His deer-skin clothing was slit to tatters; his scalp was torn away; his fingers were chewed off, but his bloody mouth was filled with hair and flesh of the brute.

Twice in Jeopardy.

An old negro was recently brought before a justice in Mobile. It seemed that Uncle Mose had fallen foul of a bulldog while in the act of entering the hen house of the dog's owner.

"Look here, Uncle Mose," the justice said, informally, "didn't I give you ten days last month for this same thing? Same hen-house you were trying to get into. What have you got to say for yourself?"

Uncle Mose scratched his head.

"Mars Willyum, yo' sent me ter de chain gang fer tryin' ter steal some chickens, didn't ye?"

"Yes, that was the charge."

"An' don't de law say yo' can't be charged twice wid de same 'fense?"

"That no man shall be twice placed in jeopardy for the identical act, yes."

"Den, sah, yo' des hab ter let me go, sah. Ah war arter de same chickens, sah."

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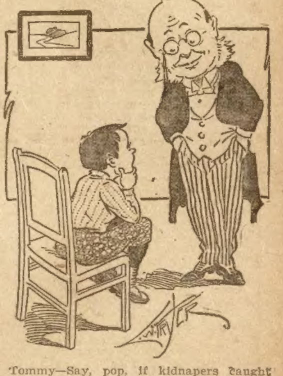

Tommy—Say, pop, if kidnapers caught ma would you pay a ransom to get her back?

Mr. Henpeck—I'd wait a while until they offered me enough inducement to take her off their hands.

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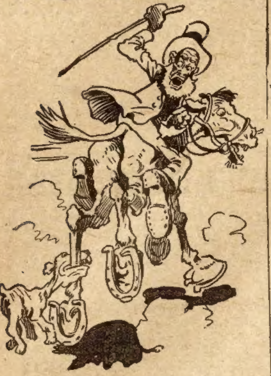
JOKES AND

Taking a Chew of His Plug.



A Lost Temperance Lesson.

Colonel Kaintuck (offering his flask to a stranger on railroad train)—Have a swig, stranger?

Stranger (a temperance advocate, with dignity)—No, sir; I thank you.

Colonel Kaintuck—All right; got your own flask, I reckon. That's the best way, after all.

Stranger—Some years ago, when traveling in Alaska, I came across a tribe which had never known the taste of liquor——

Colonel Kaintuck—Eh? White men?

Stranger—No, savages.

Colonel Kaintuck—Of course, of course—enough to make anybody savage.

Couldn't Sidetrack Fate.

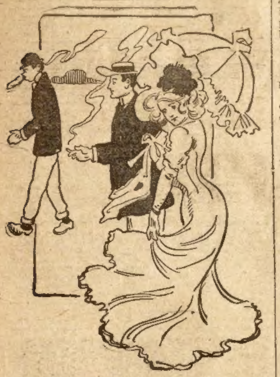
She—I'm awfully sorry, George, but our engagement is off. Here is your ring.

He—W-why, what's the matter, dear?

She—Oh, nothing; only you have dark hair and eyes.

He—Well what of that?

She—I consulted a fortune teller today and she told me I was going to marry a light-haired man with blue eyes.



Miss Krossigh—Oh! you wonder who that homely looking man is? Well, he happens to be my brother!

Mr. Mix—Oh! pray excuse me; I should have known it by the resemblance!

TAKE A RECORD

See How Many Friends Are Hurt by Coffee.

It would be just as reasonable for a temperance advocate to drink a little diluted whisky as to drink coffee, for one is as truly an intoxicant as the other, and persistence in the use of coffee brings on a variety of chronic diseases, notorious among which are dyspepsia, heart palpitation (ultimately heart failure), frequently constipation, kidney troubles, many cases of weak eyes and trembling condition of the nerves.

These are only a few of the great variety of diseases which come from an unbalanced nervous system, caused by the persistent daily use of the drug, caffeine, which is the active principle of coffee. Another bit of prima facie evidence about coffee is that the victims to the habit find great difficulty in giving it up.

They will solemnly pledge to themselves day after day that they will abandon the use of it when they know that it is shortening their days, but morning after morning they fail, until they grow to despise themselves for their lack of self-control.

Any one interested in this subject would be greatly surprised to make a systematic inquiry among prominent brain workers. There are hundreds of thousands of our most prominent people who have abandoned coffee altogether and are using Postum Food Coffee in its place, and for the most excellent reasons in the world. Many of them testify that ill health, nervous prostration and consequent inability to work, has in times past, pushed them back and out of their proper standing in life, which they have been able to regain by the use of good health, strong nerves and great vitality, since coffee has been thrown out and Postum put in its place. "There's a Reason." Read "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs., it has been called "a health classic" by some physicians.

Jinks' Mistake.

Blinks—What? Can't you keep your engagement with me?

Jinks (sadly)—No, I can't. I was drawn on a jury this week and couldn't get out of it.

Blinks—Did you try?

Jinks—Indeed I did. I did my best to make myself out to be a hopeless ignoramus, but they wouldn't let me go.

Blinks—Great Scott, man! The way to escape jury duty is to act as if you knew something.

Strenuous Whacks.

"And here is your photograph, Reginald," laughed the pretty girl. "It is a little tattered, but all there."

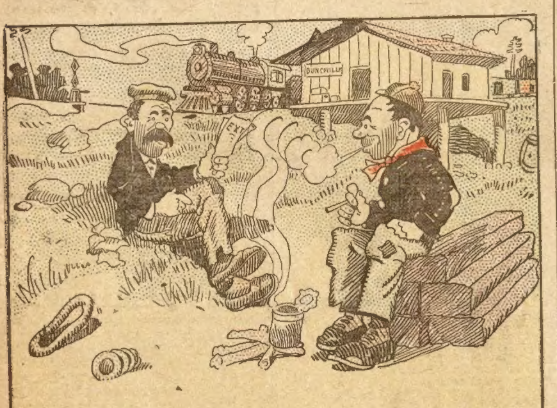
"Ah!" gushed Reginald. "You have been wearing it next to your heart and that is why it is so tattered?"

"Oh, no. You see, papa put it between the carpets while he was beating them. He said it made him hit them so much harder."

Considerate.

"Brethren," said the Rev. Mr. Goodman, bringing his sermon to a close when scarcely half way through it, "it is too hot this morning for me to preach and for you to listen. We will sing 'From Greenland's Icy Mountains,' omitting all but the first stanza, and be dismissed."

Between Freights.



Winded Willie—An' I sez, sez I, "Leddy, I'm always ez busy ez any little honeybee."

Reggy the Red—The same which wuz a whoppin' lie, old pal.

Winded Willie—Aw, I don't know. I guess w'en it comes to fillin' cells I'm about ez good as enny livin' bee.

Hans Tooted.

"But, Gretchen," protested the dignified mistress, "you should be more dignified and not call your fiance 'tootsie.' "

"But he vas a 'tootsie,' " replied Gretchen, blushing all the way up to the roots of her flaxen hair.

"How do you make him a 'tootsie'?"

"Why, you see, ma'am, he plays der biggest horn in der German band."

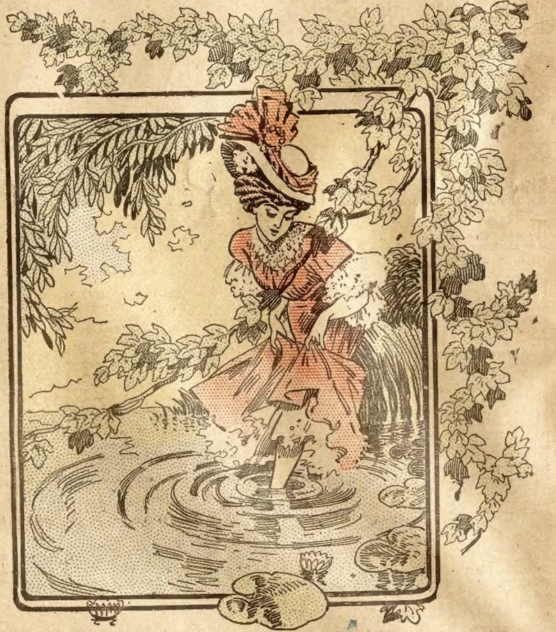
The "Ham" Retorts.

"You needn't register!" snapped the irate hotel proprietor. "I don't care for your patronage."

"And why not?" demanded the shabby tragedian in lofty tones.

"Well, sir, I heard your own friends say you were going to the bad."

"To the bad? H'm! They must have seen me coming to this hotel."



I saw her wading in the brook—
  She did not know that I was nigh.
I smiled at every step she took,
  There wading in the sparkling brook.

Her shoes and stockings she forsook,
  And held her dainty skirts knee high.
I saw her wading in the brook—
  She did not know that I was nigh.

An Editorial Necessity.

House Agent—Let me see. I have a very nice vacant flat, sir, on——

Applicant—Won't do. I don't want a flat. I must have a house.

House Agent—House?

Applicant—Yes, with a garden.

House Agent—Garden?

Applicant—Certainly.

House Agent—Um—well, now I think of it, I have one place a little out that might suit. There is a space of ten or fifteen square feet at the back. It is now paved with stone, but the pavement can be taken up easily enough.

Applicant—That will do.

House Agent—All right. Fond of flowers, eh?

Applicant—No, but I've got to have some sort of a garden, you know, because I'm the editor of an agricultural paper.

Happy at Last.

A Neapolitan widow, whose husband had been dead some years, was persuaded to go to a Spiritualist seance, and there the spirit of her dead husband appeared and spoke to her.

"My dear Agostino," said the widow to the shade, "are you happy now?"

"I am very happy," Agostino replied.

"Happier than you were when on earth with me?" asked the widow.

"Yes," replied the shade; "I am far, far happier now than I was on earth with you."

"Tell me, Agostino; what is it like in Heaven?"

"Heaven?" said Agostino. "I am not in Heaven."

Real Black.

"I want to get a ribbon for my typewriting machine," said the author.

"All right, sir," replied the polite clerk. "What color—blue, purple or black record?"

"Well, er—I guess you better give me black record. I am going to write up the past of a Pittsburg millionaire."

Mixed.

"Why did they take that snake-charmer off the bill the second night?" asked one attendant of another at the music hall.

"Because when the guv'nor came home the first night he didn't know which was her snakes and which was his!"

Their First Trip.

Mrs. A.—You are going abroad this year.

Mrs. Z.—Yes, indeed, and we shall employ a Swiss guide.

Mrs. A.—Ah, a Swiss guide to show you the Alps Mountains?

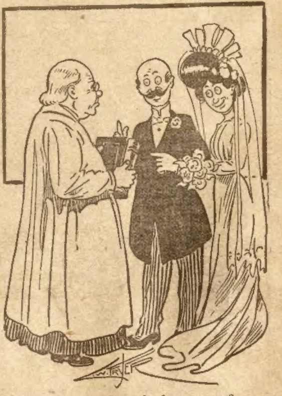
Mrs. Z.—No, a Swiss guide to show us the Swiss cheese.

A Deserving Case.

Footpad—Hold up yer hands!

Pedestrian (calmly)—I have been shopping all day with my wife.

Footpad—By Jinks! Here, take this quarter.



New Groom—What do I owe you?

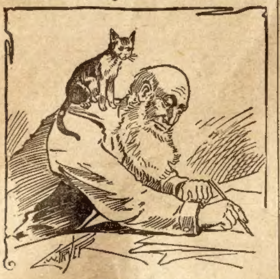
Parson—Two dollars, please.

New Groom—I'll give you one dollar and let you kiss the bride.

Parson—I'll give you fifty cents to let me off.

J°LLITY

The Cat Sitting on the Back Stoop.



Had Been Duck-Shooting.

Mrs. Blinks—See here, Mr. B., I thought you said you had been duck-shooting.

Mr. Blinks—Yes, m' dear, been duck (hic) shooting.

Mrs. Blinks—But these ducks you brought home are tame ducks.

Mr. Blinks—Y-e-s, m' dear; I tamed 'em after I (hic) shot 'em.

A Grafting Inspector.

The inspector of police was before the commissioner.

"Is there graft in your precinct?" demanded the superior.

"I think not," responded the inspector. "My impression is that I got it all."

It was at this juncture that the ax fell.

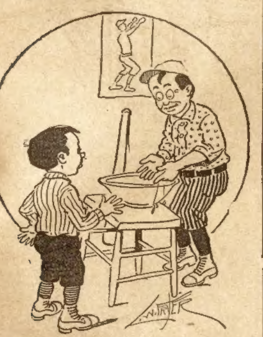
Diner—Waiter, bring me a cutlet, and also a big bone for my dog. I will pay extra for that.

Waiter—Yes, sir.

Diner (when the cutlet arrives)—Where is the bone for the dog?

Waiter—In the cutlet, sir.

Just What He Needed.



Brother Bob—W'ot am I doin'? W'y I'm gettin' ready for the ball season. Soakin' yer hands in alum water makes 'em tough.

Little Willie—Say, I played hookey terday. Lemme set in that pan awhile, will yer?

A Safe Rule.

Bad Boy—What ye talkin' 'bout me goin' to the bad place fer? Our preacher says there is one, but Johnny Stagg's preacher an' lots of other preachers says there ain't. Guess they know 'bout as well as our preacher does.

His Mother (with decision)—My son, whenever a preacher says anything that bad boys like to hear, you can jest make up your mind it isn't true.

Full of Knots.

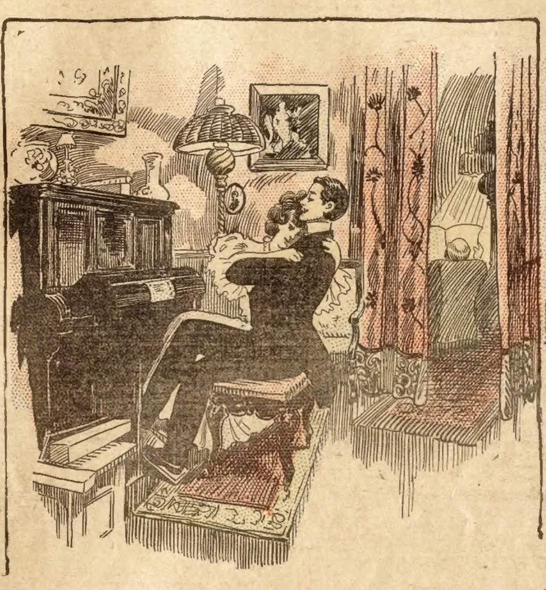
The lanky tramp removed his tattered hat and displayed his intellectual brow.

"Ah, lady," he confided, "I have brains to burn. There is nothing I like better than to tackle knotty problems."

The busy housewife reached for the ax.

"Indeed!" she said. "Well, go down to the woodpile. You will find that last load the most knotty problem you ever tackled during your career."

ALL FOOTWORK.



The Girl—O, isn't this heavenly, Charlie, dear? Papa's so absentminded he forgets half the time we've a patent piano-player.

What Two Dollars Will Do.

Tramp—Please, sir, a couple of dollars would give me a nice, comfortable home for the winter.

Benevolent Party—It would? Well, no man shall suffer all winter long for the sake of two dollars. Here is the money.

Tramp—Thankee, sir.

Benevolent Party—But stop. How is that amount to give you a home?

Tramp—It'll give me a howlin' drunk, sir, an' then the perlice an' the jedge will retire me to winter quarters, sir."

Unnecessary Effort.

Pearl—I went downtown today to see the latest conceit in hats.

Ruby—But what was the use of going downtown? You could have looked in a mirror, my dear.

Same Old Touch.

The celebrated explorer stood on the coral reef and mopped his brow.

"So white men have called here before?" he interrogated. "Well, then, my sable brother, I suppose you have felt the touch of civilization?"

Chief Ebony grinned.

"Umph, yes!" he grunted; "touched of all the ivory and gold on the island."

Can't Build on Them.

"I'm surprised that you should be so interested in watching those silly dudes."

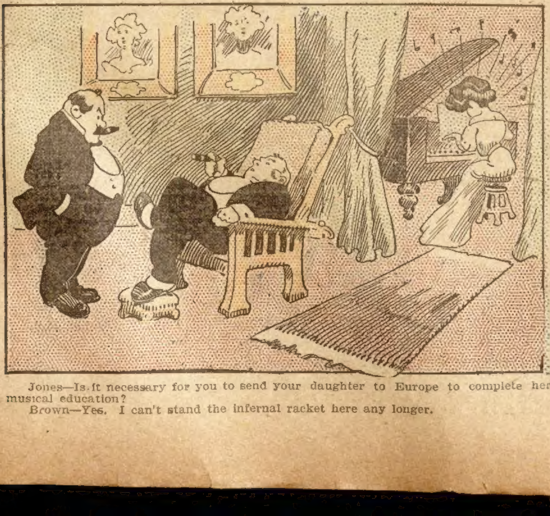
"Force of habit, I guess. I'm president of a real estate improvement company."

"Well?"

"Well, they're a vacant lot."

Constantly Occupied.

The lazy man, though he may shirk,
  Finds his enjoyment small.
He keeps so busy dodging work
  He gets no rest at all.



Jones—Is it necessary for you to send your daughter to Europe to complete her musical education?

Brown—Yes. I can't stand the infernal racket here any longer.

Cure for Snoring.

A Nortonville woman was recently complaining about her husband being a bad snorer. Here is some advice offered by an exchange, but for which this paper will not stand sponsor should any trouble occur on account of the application of the remedy:

To cure snoring, let a piece of soap be dropped into the mouth of the snorer. The oil in the soap will lubricate the pharynx and other Latin parts of the throat. The remedy, however must be applied with caution; otherwise the snorer will rise and lubricate the floor with the one dropping the soap.

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Rider Agents Wanted in each town to ride and exhibit sample 1906 model. *Write for Special Offer.* Finest Guaranteed 1906 Models $10 to $27 with Coaster-Brakes and Puncture-Proof tires, 1904 & 1905 Models all of best makes $7 to $12 500 Second-Hand Wheels All Makes and Models, good as new $3 to $8 Great Factory Clearing Sale. We Ship on Approval *without a cent deposit*, pay the freight and allow TEN DAYS' FREE TRIAL. Tires, coaster-brakes, sundries, etc. half usual prices. Do not buy till you get our catalogs. *Write at once.* MEAD CYCLE CO., Dept W53Chicago

AGENTS wanted to sell a new household novelty. E. C. HUDSON, Box 411, Wilmington, N. C.

AGENTS—If you really intend to have success, we show you. Send stamp for Booklet. Roscoe Chemical Inst., 91 Dearborn St., Suite 508, Chicago, Ill.

AGENTS WANTED to sell pocket knives with name and photo on handle; write for terms. Morris Cutlery Co., Morris, Ill., P.O.Box A

AGENTS, 500% profit selling our Novelty Sign Cards to Merchants. Write today for Free Sample Case offer. H. S. Co., 107, Des Moines, Iowa

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WE WANT AGENTS in every town to take orders for Custom-made Suits and Overcoats from $11.00 up, and Trousers from $3.50 up. Big commissions paid and large Sample Outfit in traveling case furnished free to those who can do business. You can make big money working for us. Write at once for Sample Outfit. The Warrington W. & W. Mills, Dept. 50, 173 Adams St., Chicago.

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MAGIC BILL BOOK! An entertaining and useful article. Can be used as any ordinary pocket book. Sample by mail 15c AGENTS WANTED. W. C. WATKINS & CO., Box 1505, Pittsburg, Pa.

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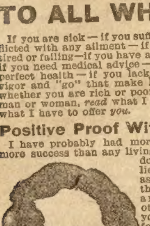
I have probably had more experience and more success than any living physician, but I don't ask you to believe that. I don't ask you to believe that my remedies are better than others. I don't ask you to take my word for anything. But I *do* ask you to give me a chance to prove my ability—to prove what my treatment will do for you—to prove that I can cure you—and to prove it **at my own expense**—to pay the cost, **every penny of it myself.** I ask permission to send you—to deliver into your hands—absolutely without cost to you a proof treatment that will convince you, Remedies that have cured thousands, remedies that I believe will cure you.



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All afflictions that can be cured by medicine—many that others consider incurable—no matter how many remedies you have vainly tried—no matter how many other doctors have failed. Curing desperate chronic cases is my specialty. **Rheumatism, Kidney Trouble, All Diseases of the Stomach, Liver and Bowels, Catarrh, Diseases of the Bladder and Prostate Gland, Nervousness, All Female Troubles, Weak Lungs, Asthma, Bronchitis and Chronic Coughs, All Skin Diseases, Scrofula, Impure Blood, Partial Paralysis, Piles, Heart Diseases, Lumbago, Anemia, General Debility,** All Chronic Ailments are being cured every day. Thousands have been cured in the past — many just like your case. Won't you let me try to cure you?

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This is all you have to do—Write me a description of your case — write me fully and freely — tell me as much about your condition as you can. Careful attention to each case has helped to make me successful. I want to succeed in your case—I want you to help me. Tell me how you are and by return mail I will send you the proof treatment, sealed in a plain wrapper, postage paid, and free—free to you—free to any afflicted friend or neighbor. It may mean long life, health —strength—vigor—to you if you write me today. You have nothing to lose, everything to gain. Address

DR. JAMES W. KIDD, Box 1225, Fort Wayne, Ind.

NOTE: We have known Dr. Kidd for years—we know that he will do exactly what he promises. If in need of treatment you should accept his generous offer.

MEN WANTED everywhere to distribute circulars, adv. matter, tack signs, etc. National Distributing Bureau, 95 Oakland Bank Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

MEN WANTED in every locality throughout the United States with rig or capable of handling horses, to advertise our goods, tacking up show cards in all conspicuous places, and distributing small advertising matter. Commission or salary $90 a month and expenses $3.00 a day. Steady employment to good reliable men. We lay out your work for you. No experience needed. Write for full particulars. EMPIRE MEDICINE COMPANY, London, Ontario, Canada

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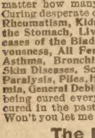
The WONDER of the Age. No sewing or darning. Repairs clothing, silk, satin, cotton goods, ribbons, fabrics of all kinds, kid gloves, mackintoshes, umbrellas, parasols, stockings, etc. Package, postpaid, 10 cents; 3 packages, 25 cents. Address Penn Publishing Co., Parnassus, Pa.



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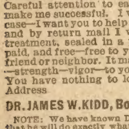

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This is a very useful book, being a guide to the successful Hunting and Trapping of Wild Animals. It tells how to fish; gives right season for trapping; how to make, set and bait traps for all kinds of wild animals; how to make and use birdlime; to tell true value of skins; to skin all animals; to dress and tan skins, furs, and leather, with or without wool or hair; to skin or stuff birds; baits and hooks for fishing; to fish successfully without nets, spears, snares, "bobs" or bait, a great secret; to choose and clean guns; to breed minks for skins; Bryon's Lightning Gunner, Sportsman's Hints, Helps and Suggestions, list of firms who buy and sell skins, furs, etc. In order to introduce our catalogue of bargains we will send you "Life in the Woods" upon receipt of 10 cents, stamps or silver. Write today to UNITED SPECIALTY CO., Book Dept., 94 DEARBORN STREET, CHICAGO, ILL. Ask for "Life in the Woods," when ordering.

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THE SECRET MARRIAGE;

Or

THE FATE OF A BIGAMIST.

By CONSTANCE BEATRICE WILLARD, author of "Magnolia Blossoms," "Red Roses and Red Love," "A Traitor to Love," etc.

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Begun in No. 27, July 6. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

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CHAPTER XII.

THE FORSAKEN WIFE.

Six months passed, happily to some, with disaster to others, and with leaden feet to the ones whose reflections are shown in this outline of the circumstances which brought them into close connection. The summer faded into fall, Christmas passed, and the new year was more than six weeks on its way, when Helen made the very undesirable discovery that George Goodrich loved her.

At first she refused to believe it, but her eyes sharpened by her experience, could not play her false, and she was forced to admit that this honest, upright young man had given her his heart. This worried her until she could not sleep at night, and she longed to ask advice of the only friend she had made, aside from Mrs. Goodrich, one whose face showed that life had not been an entirely peaceful one, and out of whose grave eyes looked a haunting sorrow, the village librarian, Mrs. Grace Morgan. While she longed, however, she stifled it, for George's secret could only exist between him and her.

Again and again she dodged him, for she could not bear to lose a friend, but at last he cornered her, and asked pleasantly:

"Will it annoy you or be too much of an effort to entertain me tonight? Mother is going to some kind of a church affair. I'll take her there, and as it's going to be quite a long session, I thought I'd come back home between whiles if you had nothing else on hand."

"I have nothing," she returned, smiling at him in spite of herself. Oh, how good he had been to her, this quiet young man, who knew all the gossip, and yet had never asked a question! Into the bosom of his home he had taken her, and he and his mother had coaxed her back to health, and placed within her reach work that brought her plentiful returns. Owing to the position he occupied, George had been able to turn all the linen of the hotel over to her, and her exqusite work was highly prized by the proprietor. One of the boasts of his house was that the linen was as fine as that of any private home, no matter how magnificent, and he was glad indeed to have one who could make the monograms and different designs with which he had it decorated. Helen had always loved to use her needle, was so neat and accurate that she earned a good living, and was able to keep intact the check Calhoun had given her. She never intended to cash it, and would return it as soon as she had a definite address. Of her sorrow she said nothing, but tried to become absorbed in her work and to forget.

During the winter George had charge of the hotel, looking after the decorating which was being done all the while, and so was as busy then as during the rush season. However, he always came home to lunch, though before Helen was in the house he had not stirred from the hotel until he was so exhausted he could scarcely move.

The very day he asked Helen for a private interview he took back a large bundle of her work, turning it over to the owner who was down for a short inspection, and as he looked at it the latter said admiringly:

"That woman is an artist. Wish I could meet her."

"If you did," replied the young clerk quietly, "you'd never get another stitch of her work."

The man laughed carelessly:

"And to think how women regard these things! Just because she once boarded here doesn't make any difference."

"It does to her."

"So it seems. Won't even give her name, eh?"

"I have warned you," George said lightly, and the proprietor laughed again. Then he strolled off whistling, and forgot all about it.

In the meanwhile Helen was trembling, wishing that she could see some way of evading the coming interview, but she knew that to pretend a headache would only put matters off, for determination was shining in his gray eyes and showed in the very way he had plastered down his light brown hair. It must come.

When they met at dinner, however, he was just the same, jolly as the meal was long, teasing his mother, yet tenderly fastening her sables about her, sables he had in his earlier days denied himself to buy for her, and as she looked after the two as they went along the village street, in the bright moonlight, and she watched his gentleness and her dependence, she realized that there was a man who would be a very tower of strength in case of any need.

Sighing heavily, she returned to the fire which was burning in the grate, and sat there, dreamily looking into its flames, and trying to decide what she had better do. Her heart was not his. How it leaped as she thought of the other, the one who had deserted her! No need to even ask herself that question. As long as she lived, that wonderful week would stand out as the brightest, most holy time of her whole life. Yes, though as the poor girl believed, she had been but a man's passing plaything, to her poor heart the memory of what she had then considered his love, was sacred.

When George opened the door and came in very gently to avoid disturbing her, she was still sitting, her head resting upon her left hand, adorned with the round wedding ring and Calhoun's diamond, which she never removed, and the gleam of the jewel caught the man's eyes, and they filled with an angry light, but he gained full control of himself, took up a magazine from the table, and seating himself, waited for her to come back from her dreams.

Perhaps half an hour passed, then she raised her head and saw him, magazine in hand, but not reading. How could he when that face was before him?

"When did you come in?" she asked quietly, turning so as to face him.

"Oh, some time back, but I want to talk about you," abruptly changing the subject.

"Very well." If it had to come, better get it over as soon as possible.

"Miss Croton," George spoke in a quiet way, for he had not occupied his position so long as he had without learning how to control voice and temper thoroughly, "I am going to disturb you a little, I am afraid, for I know how sweet and tenderhearted you are, but I hope you will hear me out. We have lived together in the same house for six months, and I think we understand each other pretty thoroughly. I'm just a plain, rather heavy sort of a fellow, but what convictions come to me, stay. When I make up my mind I cannot change it. When I want something I try very hard to get it."

"I know you are the soul of goodness and kindness," Helen said, her voice trembling.

He held up his hand and continued speaking with that reserve force:

"You know what I am going to say. I have not tried very hard to keep my state of feeling from you."

"And I have tried—" she began, but again he held up his hand. "Of course you tried to keep me from speaking to you, but I felt as though I ought to and from the selfish standpoint of my own feelings. To one like you, the word 'love' may be repulsive, but I wish I could make you understand there are different kinds of love, and that mine will not annoy you in any way. We can even speak of it by another name, if you wish."

"Another name could not change the fact," she said gently, the tears standing in her eyes at his consideration.

"No, I suppose not. Then if you will let me, I want to tell you that I love you wholly and utterly, and I beg you to honor me by becoming my wife."

While his voice was so even, the muscles of his face quivered, and his love looked from his eyes with magnetic force. What consolation such dignified words were to the poor, tortured heart no words can convey, and she herself was at a loss how to refuse, and yet not hurt him.

"George," she commenced, using his Christian name for the first time, "I cannot tell you all that happened there at the hotel."

"Stop," he said quickly, "I know. Don't tell me anything. If it had not been for you I would have killed him that day he dared to come there, with his box of flowers in advance, and ask for you. Even his telegrams were an insult."

Helen lifted her head and stared at him in amazement.

"What day, George?"

"Just after you left. He sent up a great box of red roses, following three foolish telegrams, and then came himself."

"And you never told me!" she wailed.

"Why, Helen," dropping the "Miss" unconsciously, "you told me never to speak of him!" and there was amazement in his every movement.

"Where are my telegrams?"

"He took them away with him."

"Oh, George, George, my heart was broken! Can't you see there was some awful mistake? No scoundrel would have returned in that way. Oh, if I only had my telegrams!" and she writhed in her misery.

It was a hard moment for George, but selfishness was not a part of his nature, and so he said slowly:

"I can tell you what was in them. I made him identify them by writing out their contents."

Helen sprang to her feet, her eyes shining, her face lit with such joy that she was transformed. "Quick, quick," she cried, "tell me, or I cannot stand it! I cannot! Oh, if all this misery were for nothing, and my darling was true to me!"

It was a difficult task to tear down his own happiness, to throw away all hope, for as he looked at her, he knew that there was more in the matter than he had thought, or she would not have been so upset over the fact that he had returned.

CHAPTER XIII.

SO DIFFERENT FROM ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW.

During the time Helen had been with the Goodriches she had passed many a weary hour reading, and had in time been induced to go herself for the books. There she met the librarian and finally grew to love her. The woman seemed to be struggling with herself, and Helen, in her grief and wild unhappiness, often longed to help her if possible and finally she gained a little insight to Mrs. Morgan's troubles.

The two were discussing one of the popular books, in which the heroine is made to leave her husband because of his intemperance. The latter defends himself by saying that it is his wife's coldness and utter indifference to his comfort that drive him to his club, where he has friends, who, though they sometimes beguile him into drinking, do not throw all his efforts at friendship back in his face.

Helen had not liked the book, while Mrs. Morgan appeared to agree with the wife.

"To throw aside such a man, when a little womanly tenderness would have utterly reformed him! Bah! I have no sympathy with such ideas," she said energetically.

"No woman can be happy if married to a drinking man," Mrs. Morgan returned, shaking her head sorrowfully.

"I have known a number. The sensible woman takes that as a bad temper, or something of the kind, and makes the best of it. She does not nag, but tries to make herself just so sweet and true that he forgets, in her love, the temptation of the drink. If I were married to a man whose worst fault was drinking I'd fight it out, step by step, until I won, or die right then and there," and the young face glowed.

"It's lovely, but, child, you do not know," was the sad reply.

"Perhaps I do not know about drinking, but there are so many other things that are much more terrible than a weakness. Drinking, in my mind, is but a weakness. Can't you appreciate how much worse a man might be than merely to drink? There are men in the world who break women's hearts, not caring. Today they pick up a new heart, gaze upon its very center, see the life blood throbbing but for them, and then, when the passing whim is over, just give it a jolt, and rush off after others. Think of such men! Can you imagine anything worse?"

"Then you think it possible for a woman to reform a man?" Mrs. Morgan asked softly.

"If the woman's love is strong, patient and noble enough, yes."

'Suppose a man had loved a woman eighteen years, through a very unhappy marriage she forced upon him because of a previous promise, do you think his love was strong enough to help her, if she tried to do it?"

"Do you know of a man who can love consistently for eighteen years? My dear friend, I would have thought that impossible. I thought men could not love even eighteen days," her voice trembled a little, then she added: "And what of the woman?"

Mrs. Morgan attended to the wants of one of the patrons, then returning, said in so low a voice that Helen scarcely could hear her, although she imagined what she meant by the expression on the sweet face:

"I imagine that the woman has retained her love, through a very happy marriage, until this very day."

"Then why is it she does not take up her duty? Is she a coward?"

"You really think it is her duty?"

"I honestly do," and this conversation caused Mrs. Morgan to lie awake all night, thinking deeply, and Helen to cry herself into a sick headache.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE THREE TELEGRAMS.

As she looked at him, her face alternately flushing and paling, Helen suddenly realized that there were other types than the two she and Mrs. Morgan had discussed, and feared that in his love for her George might refuse the contents of the telegrams.

"To think," she cried, "that all these

weary months the telegrams and flowers had been sent!"

"Why do you attach so much importance to the flowers?" George asked slowly. All of the sunshine was passing out of his life; he knew it, and it was impossible to stop the tragedy.

"Because he always claimed that those roses reminded him of me. Quick, tell me the telegrams."

Slowly, for each word cost him an effort, he repeated the messages:

"The first was:

" 'New York at last. The Springs as fast as train will bring me. Dear love.' "

Helen leaned forward, her glorious eyes shining, her body tense:

"Does that sound like the words of a man who meant evil towards me?" she whispered. "Quick, the others."

"The second was:

" 'Precious One: Don't worry. Soon be with you, then explanations will follow.'

"The third was:

" 'Your sacrifice magnificent. I'll make up fully. Don't let anything that comes under your notice worry you. Until we meet.' "

"And you mean to say he sent those in advance, and some roses in advance, and then came to the hotel for me? That article in the New York paper was a horrible mistake, and our marriage was a true one, after all," and she began to sob bitterly. But one word lingered in George's mind.

"Marriage?" he cried. "What does that mean?"

"Mean? Why, my marriage with him, of course."

"Then you were married to him?" George asked in a dazed way. With a haste which was feverish, Helen told him in a few words the story of her secret marriage, showed her certificate and Calhoun's signed statement of their marriage. She also unfolded the uncashed check he had given her.

George looked them over carefully, then said slowly.

"My dear friend, you are his wife, and have every claim to him, unless he was married prior to this ceremony, which I do not believe, for I confess that he did not act in that way. If you had only confided fully in me I think much pain to him and you would have been avoided"

"But you will send for him now?" she cried, and George felt a strange [illegible] in that she loved him enough as a friend to turn toward him for help.

"Where shall I send, dear girl?" he replied. For the life of him, he could not check an endearing word or two

Helen suddenly looked at him, her eyes starting from her head.

"I don't know," she said faintly. Yes, impossible as it seemed, while he had talked so much about his home in the South, she did not know his State even.

From then on George was a busy man. He tried to gain some information from the racetrack where Calhoun entered his horses, but nothing was known there, for he had given a New York address, fearing prejudice against his part of the country. So, in Wall street, he had been the Boy Mystery. George took great pains to visit several hotels where his rival had stopped, but to no avail, and Helen almost lost her mind, waiting, hoping and blaming herself for her lack of confidence

At last George entered this advertisement in all the leading New York newspapers:

"Calhoun Fairley: Apply G. G., Highland Springs, for good news."

Right below this was another advertisement:

"Wildly anxious. Communicate with Ken or White Rose. Cal."

Cal never saw either. Helen read, but did not understand, and Pansy did not because she was afraid to read any newspaper for fear of coming across the announcement of Calhoun's death. There was one who did read it, Kenneth Rolf, and he took it immediately to the judge, the minister and the doctor, and after they had talked over it, they decided that Ken must go to Highland Springs and discover what was meant.

CHAPTER XV.

"THAT WARM, RED REBEL, THE HEART."

"Pansy, sweetheart, come here."

The words were like music to the ears of little Pansy, and with a glad cry she ran to the rustic seat upon which she and Ken had held their very few interviews since the shadow of the mystery had fallen upon them. Once there, she saw his beloved face peeping at her around a great cypress and there was something in the dark eyes that made her heart leap.

"Oh, Ken, what is it?" she asked, her heart beating wildly.

"My little darling," he returned, kissing the sweet lips and drawing her to a seat on the bench and throwing himself down beside her, where he could best watch the changes on the girlish face.

For a few minutes the two sat there, perfectly happy to be together. Aunt Salome, seeing them, began to cry, holding her apron to her eyes.

"To think such Heaven-mated folks must always stay apart just because of the major's fool notions," she thought, for way back in their younger days, before the major had met either of the women who were to so influence his life, Salome, then the center of a gay, laughing crowd, the cherished daughter of her parents, had rather fancied the dashing major, then without any insignia to his name. He, good man, had never known of it, but her affection for her second cousin had been strong enough to influence her in the rejection of several excellent proposals in her palmy days, and then, after the awful war, when they were all poverty-stricken together, it was her care which had pulled him through the sickness which settled upon him and many of the family. Not only did she nurse him, but in an epidemic of yellow fever, she had boldly entered infected houses and nursed until she too, fell a victim. Hers was a mild attack, but it took her youth, her beauty, and for years her strength, and she found herself before thirty, a hand-about charity relation, welcome everywhere, but more on account of her good traits than anything else. She attended the major's marriage, and her eyes alone pierced the bridegroom's heart to discover the secret, that it was more to save his home than love for his wife that had occasioned it. Later, she knew almost before the major himself, of his love for Pansy's mother, and what he did not, that it was recognized and returned by that unfortunate lady.

After the death of Calhoun's mother, she had spent the great part of her life at the major's, taking care of Pansy, and had bitterly opposed the girl's marriage to her cousin.

"I want her to get out of these unfortunate attachments," she thought again and again, and it was because of her encouragement that the young people had at first been attracted to each other. They knew nothing of this, for were they not confronted with a terrible problem, and did it not keep them apart and make them miserable?

"Heard from any of the judges?" Pansy asked, her blue eyes like a bit of Heaven set in her tender, loving face.

"No, dearest," catching a bit of wistaria, and twining it about her head, and then holding her off to look at the effect, "but I believe that perhaps a little of the mystery may be solved."

"By whom?"

"Well, incidentally by me," and then he told her of the advertisement above this.

Pansy tried not to look disappointed. She had hoped for somethnig really positive.

"What do you think about it?" he asked, knowing just how she felt, and patting her dimpled hand, which was thinner than when it had been held in the dying man's grasp.

"I don't know, only that it is likely that Cal was known to many up North. Ken!"

"What is it? Oh, come a little nearer, dear. Let me put my arms about you and imagine for the moment that we are free."

With a smile Pansy crept into the tender arms and laid that weary little head upon Ken's shoulder, and once more Aunt Salome cried.

"You know, Ken, Cal said that he loved some one else, or about that. Suppose he met with an accident, and never went back to her, and that she is worrying, and has inserted the advertisement, for you see, Ken, that is where Cal was stopping when I sent for him."

"It really is? I thought so," Ken returned. Then he asked slowly

"Have you gone over his papers, Pansy?"

The girl shook her head.

"May I?"

"If it will do any good, of course," she returned, then calling:

"Aunt Salome," brought that lady to the door. "Let Ken go to Cal's room, Auntie. He wants to look over his things," and as he disappeared with the kind-hearted old woman, Pansy began to sing in an undertone, for in spite of her trouble, she was full of life, and the old garden was beautiful, with spring breaking forth, giving of her choicest flowers to supplant those of winter, for in that paradise there is no cold, nor snow, but always a sweet, flower-laden air, the home of true lovers.

"But Love is a spy who is plotting treason,
In league with that warm, red rebel, the Heart."

Again and again she sung the couplet, not remembering where she had read it, until she was startled by Ken's voice calling:

"Pansy, Pansy."

"Here, dear, where you always find me," she returned, knowing that it was where he wanted to find her. The young lawyer's face was pale as death, as he came towards her, his hands full of papers.

"Pansy, Cal never opened his trunk while home here, and I have found a great pile of letters, all unopened, but I looked at them, for I have hoped to find some explanation."

"Have you?"

"In part. Here is a letter from the major. If he had only taken time to read it, all this trouble would not have fallen upon you—upon us, for in it the major gives very explicit directions about the marriage he wished consummated, and the reason why. Oh, if he had read it!"

"Is there anything else?"

Ken opened a long box and disclosed a dried rose, which in its fullness of bloom must have been a goregeous red.

"And that is all?"

"All but this," and Ken held before Pansy's eyes a splendid photograph of Helen's beautiful face.

Pansy eagerly caught it, and looked for a long time at the [illegible]. At last she raised her eyes to Ken's face and said with conviction:

"This is the girl he had learned to love, Ken, just as we love. She is a good, true, noble girl, and perhaps is suffering just as we, and Cal, not knowing what to do, is lingering by her side."

"I feel that she is just what you say," the lawyer returned.

"Indeed, yes. She is his red rose maiden, and that rose is in some way connected with her," Pansy said with a nervous laugh, not knowing that Helen's loving hands had put it in her husband's trunk that he might be pleasantly reminded of her in unpacking.

"Now, Ken, precious one," Pansy cried, springing to her feet, "you cannot get off fast enough. Take the picture, the rose and the major's letter with you. Go to that place and see if there is any trace of her or him. Go." Her face then flushed crimson as she twisted her lace handkerchief until it dropped in bits at their feet, but she continued: "Tell Cal I consent to either of us seeking a divorce."

"You consent?" he whispered. It was what he had been longing for her to do for months but had not dared urge her.

"You see, Ken, as long as it was to profit only us, I could not, but now another woman is involved, I consent willingly, gladly," and so Kenneth Rolf went out into the world to find one who was worse than dead, with his sweetheart's kisses on his lips, and her permission to free her through the law courts, determined to succeed.

The concluding chapters of this splendid story will be found in the Ledger issue of next week. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year; it is worth many times that amount. Send in your subscriptions, for many great stories will appear during the coming months. With every subscription we send entirely free of cost one of our splendid stereoscopes or any six of our standard patterns. See pages thirteen and fifteen.

A BACHELOR'S ROMANCE

The Colonel smiled and shook his head, still
[illegible]
"My boy," he said, "you're right, I know,
but all of us can't think that way
I should have married years ago, in days I
wish I could recall,
But somehow I could not decide—God bless
the girls; I love 'em all.

"When I was young I knew a girl whose
hair was soft and chestnut brown;
She was a gentle little thing, and showed it
when she let me down;
And then there came a tall brunette—a girl
to make a hermit fond;
And next the widow was the one; I changed
because she was a blonde.

"How can a man be stanch and true and his
affection firm and strong,
When every day he lives on earth a pretty
woman comes along?
No matter if their hair be black, or golden
as the summer sun,
Or auburn as the autumn woods—I'm bound
to love 'em, every one.

"But somehow through the maze of years
my thoughts go back and settle down
Upon a gentle little girl whose eyes were
soft and tender brown,
Who thought I loved her—for a time—and
whose affection was not hid.
My boy, you're right. Ring for a drink, I
didn't know it. But I did."

POLLY'S ENTHUSIASM.

BY GRACE MORAN.

"Mr. Bolton," Polly spoke hurriedly. From all she had heard Mr. Bolton was an elderly man, yet this decidedly good-looking, cleancut young fellow who sat at the open desk was scarcely 35.

"I have come about the Babies' home," she went on hurriedly. "One of the society said that you were interested in the home. We are in immediate need of $500 and are trying to raise it quickly."

"Suppose you tell me something about it," he asked. "I do not think I know much about this charity."

"We send you circulars and reports and things," she reproached. "I guess, perhaps, you don't read them."

"Reports are such dry reading," he reminded. "An oral report would be more satisfactory, I should think."

Polly needed no urging. The home for abandoned and ill-treated babies was a charity very dear to her. She lost her feeling of self-consciousness in telling of the work accomplished, and carried on by her enthusiasm, her face glowed as she spoke of the good that was being done.

She did not realize how completely she had lost herself in her subject until the man raised his hand

"I am very well content that the charity is a deserving one," he agreed. "I believe that you are in need of $500?"

"For repairs to the summer home," she explained. "We take the poor little tots out there as soon as it gets warm enough."

He drew out a check book from his pocket and presently tore out and handed her a slip of paper. "By all means, let the kiddies have a good time," he smiled. "They are to be congratulated on having such a champion."

"But this is not your name," she stammered, as she glanced at the signature, "and why, you've made it out for the whole $500."

"I think there will be no trouble about the signature," he smiled. "You see, Mr. Bolton has gone to hold a consultation with another lawyer in this building about a matter in which he is acting for me. I am waiting his return."

"And you are Henry Nevill?" she gasped. Nevill, a young millionaire, had just come to Barhampton to take up his residence. He was still the newest topic of conversation, though few had met him.

"I am Henry Nevill," he admitted, "and very glad to know Miss Polly Youngling."

His courtly bow completed her confusion, and she stumbled out of the office, stammering an excuse.

She grew hot and cold by turns as she sped up the street, the check still tightly clasped in her hand. Polly was the ugly duckling of the family, self-conscious, plain of feature and liable to go to pieces over the unexpected.

She wondered what Nevill could think of her embarrassment. Her nose always got red when she was embarrassed. It was bad enough that it should be a pug.

It was all she could do to keep back the tears until after she had told her glorious news and had hurried home. Then, in her her own room, the tears flowed unchecked.

It was several days before she saw Nevill again. She felt her cheeks growing hot as she noticed his approach and with an awkward little nod sought to hurry past. But he turned to walk beside her and with a question or two about the babies soon put her completely at her ease.

"I should like to see the youngsters," he said. "If you are bound in that direction may I come, too?"

She gave hurried assent and once in the home her shyness was forgotten in the children. Nevill went with her through the building and his quick eyes caught here and there the makeshifts by which the committee sought to force their insufficient funds to cover their needs

"I think I shall have to ask you to share your hobby with me," he smiled when, at last, the visit was over. "Great work is being done here. May I send you a check?"

"It seems too good to be true," she cried. "We need money so badly and it is so hard to make people realize."

"You should bring them yourself to look the place over," he suggested. "Your enthusiasm is infectious."

For the first time she realized how she must have run on and her confusion returned.

"I am sorry I talked too much," she stammered. "I must have bored you terribly."

"Quite to the contrary," he rejoined. "It is pleasant to find a young woman who still has enthusiasms."

But the charm was broken. Polly forgot the babies and became conscious of her nose and though he walked beside her until her home was reached, she did not speak except in monosyllables.

"May I bring the check instead of sending it?" he asked as they reached her gate. Polly nodded, and with a choked "Good-by" fled into the house and to her room, that sanctuary of sorrows.

Twice she had blundered. She began to believe it true that she would never be like other girls.

Yet, when Nevill brought the check the following day he did not hurry his departure and that call was but the first of many. There were plans to be made for little outings for the babies, suggestions regarding repairs and at last he spoke the question that had hovered on his lips for weeks.

"But how can you see anything in me," she demanded, holding back from him. "I'm ugly and stupid. There are lots of girls that are pretty and interesting."

"O, thou of little faith," he quoted. "You don't know, Polly mine, that I loved you when you began to talk about the babies there in Bolton's office. You have what the others lack and that is beauty of soul. It's Polly of the enthusiasms whom I want. May I have her, dear?"

And in her new wonderment that any one should love her, Polly forgot to stammer when she whispered "Yes."

It Was His Dog.

An automobile dashed along the country road. Turing a curve, it came suddenly upon a man with a gun on his shoulder and a weak, sick-looking old dog beside him. The dog was directly in the path of the motor car. The chauffeur sounded his horn, but the dog did not move—until he was struck. After that he did not move.

The automobile stopped and one of the ment got out and came forward. He had once paid a farmer $10 for killing a calf that belonged to another farmer. This time he was wary.

"Was that your dog?"

"Yes."

"You own him?"

"Yes."

"Looks as if we'd killed him."

"Certainly looks so."

"Very valuable dog?"

"Well, not so very."

"Will $5 satisfy you?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, here you are." He handed a $5 bill to the man with the gun, and added, pleasantly, "I'm sorry to have broken up your hunt."

"I wasn't going hunting," replied the other, as he pocketed the bill.

"Not going hunting? Then what were you doing with the dog and the gun?"

"Going down to the woods to shoot the dog."

Expected Finish.

"Yes," said the prospective purchaser, "I always select an automobile by its motors."

"But don't you pay any attention to its finish?" asked the salesman, who had been showing the upholstering and brass trimmings.

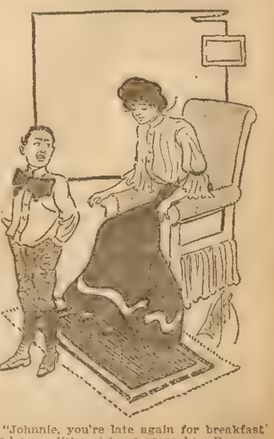
"Oh, no. All of my automobiles generally finish up in a tree or in a haystack."

When He Is Noble.

Little Willie—Say, pa, what is one of nature's noblemen?

Pa—A candidate for office just before election day, my son.

No Inducement.



"Johnnie, you're late again for breakfast and your little sister was early. Remember what I told you about the early bird."

"Aw, who wants any worms? Let her have 'em."

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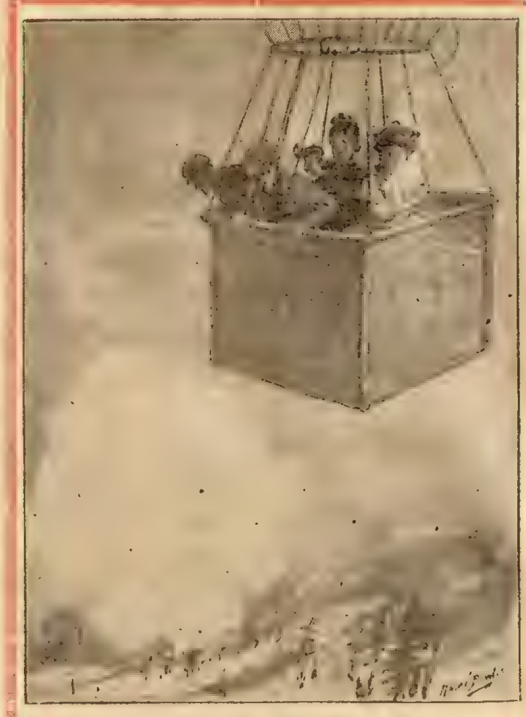
CHAPTER XXVI.
THE WORLD AFIRE!

The one thing Bob feared was a collision with the other balloon.

It seemed as improbable as finding a needle in a haystack, and yet at the same time it was a possible thing.

The unexpected does occur.

In the event of his discovering the enemy his plan was to mount upward and keep the other below, for this would prevent any villainous attempt at destruction as tried on the former occasion.


They saw a blinding flash.

Suddenly the clouds ceased to drift.

They were in motion.

A breeze had arisen, and they began to travel at a rapid pace.

Bob guessed the time to be near dawn, as the position of the stars when seen through the dense clouds, told him this.

Remembering his desire to land so as to reach the capital as soon as possible, in order to prevent the squire from getting away with much of the property, he determined that it would be better to fall below the clouds than to go up.

The gas began to escape.

They sank quickly and Bob was glad to cast out a sand bag in order to stay this descent.

Now they floated between the earth's surface and the clouds, only waiting to see what manner of country lay below.

That they were not over one of the great lakes which border Michigan Bob was sure, for there would be some reflection in the water to disclose this fact, were it so.

All around, beneath, darkness.

Not a sound reached their ear—the solitude was so intense that it could not be likened to anything else.

Pete was awake, too, for he knew they were near a crisis in their affairs.

The wind hurried them on, and promised to make their descent dangerous.

Mrs. Muscroft showed signs of fear, but the others had endured dangers far worse and could even reassure her.

"It is growing light above," said Bob.

True enough, there was a gray gleam in the scurrying clouds.

Dawn could not be far away.

"Hark!" cried Pete suddenly.

They all listened intently, and could hear a peculiar rushing sound, as some huge body passing through space.

"Look, look!" said Pete.

"The other balloon," echoed Bob.

Whether their enemies knew of their presence below or not, they, too, were coming down as if to prepare for an early landing.

Luckily they failed to come in contact with the bulk of the Sky Traveler, though there was not twenty feet to spare.

As they rushed by, our boys heard startled exclamations, which proved that the others had not dreamed how close they were to the fugitives.

Of course the second balloon was brought up below them.

Thus they were favored.

"Oh, for daylight and a chance to reach terra firma once more.

Bob experienced an anxiety now he had never felt before.

It's cause was simple.

He had with him those whose lives were much more precious than his own—it was on his mother's account he longed to reach safety.

Although minutes may at times pass on leaden wings, they must go by in the end.

The light increased.

Eagerly they strained their eyes to see what might be below, hoping for the best.

It was an anxious time.

When the light became strong enough they saw the hated form of the other balloon there, waiting until they should descend, and doubtless ready to adopt desperate measures.

All he could do was to cast out the last bag of sand and once more mount above the clouds.

The other balloon followed.

That was to be expected.

They sailed along in the azure heights during several hours.

Then Bob made up his mind to drop once more below the clouds, and try for a landing.

They would be unable to rise again, since all their ballast was gone.

He allowed only a small quantity of gas to escape, and their descent was easy.

Through the clouds they passed.

All waited, expectant, hoping to see a favorable place for landing.

Bob mopped his face.

"What a change from up there. Why, it's as hot as a furnace down here," he declared, and Parachute Pete agreed with him.

A strange fact interested them—the heat came from below instead of above, and they concluded it must be the radiation from the earth they felt.

When they had dropped through the last mass of fog-like clouds, they saw a sight that almost paralyzed them, a sight that was fearful beyond the power of pen to describe.

It seemed as though the whole surface of the earth were afire—flames and smoke appeared in every direction, and to add to the terror of their situation they had no ballast which could be tossed out in order to stay their downward flight.

CHAPTER XXVII.
THE LAST BOMB.

The whole nature of the situation was plain enough.

On account of the exceedingly dry season the woods of the Northern States had become like tinder.

Forest fires occur in this section almost every year, but on this occasion their fury was spread over such vast sections that it was little wonder our friends, bursting upon the awful scene through the clouds, should imagine that the whole earth was ablaze.

It was a sight never to be forgotten.

At first their thoughts were wholly of sympathy for the wretched people whose homes were in this wooded country.

It was evident that terrible calamities must have occurred in many places, whole towns being wiped out of existence

Then their own condition burst upon them.

The explanation of the intense heat, radiating from the earth's surface was plain.

They were slowly but surely sinking and as all their ballast was gone, it looked as though nothing could prevent them dropping into the heart of the fire.

Of course there was danger in another sense

Their airship was of an inflammable character, and at any moment a flying spark might do the business.

There would be an explosion, and the passengers of the Sky Traveler would find their fate in the blazing forests of Michigan.

Bob aroused himself to the desperate nature of the situation.

Something must be done, and that immediately, in order to save them.

There was only one way of accomplishing this.

He called to Pete.

"Throw the gun overboard—throw anything and everything that has weight. Quick, on your life, man."

Parachute Pete needed no further urging, as he could see the gravity of the situation.

Over went the repeating rifle, whirling down into the fiery depths below.

It had served them well in the past, but in this crisis could be of more assistance by relieving the balloon of its weight than in any other possible way.

Nor did Pete stop there.

He grasped the situation and knew that the dropping of the rifle alone would not accomplish what was desired.

So, with the avidity of a hawk pouncing upon a flutternig duck, Pete clutched first of all the prov[illegible]

It was empt[illegible] it would have been all the same if full, since it was a question of life and death.

Other things followed in quick succession,

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instruments that declared the height the balloon had attained, barometer, thermometer and other things.

Their descent was less rapid, but they were all the same going down—down.

Rendered desperate, Pete laid hold of the lockers that had been fitted into the basket.

At another time he might have been unable to tear the woodwork apart without the use of tools.

Now the case was different

Desperation nerves the arm to feats of strength that is ordinarily beyond its power.

So Pete tore those wooden lockers out as though they were a mere nothing, and sent them flying through space.

And now he had done.

Really nothing remained in the basket but the four people.

It was a grave question, and one fraught with life and death to them.

He decided that there was still a slight dip.

Oh! for something to throw over—something, the loss of which would cause a change and send the balloon upward instead of down.

In his desperation Pete pulled off his shoes and sent them down into the fiery depths.

It was agony unspeakable.

He could easily imagine the end, when the great gas bag shriveling in the intense heat would burst with a mighty sound.

Useless parachute then to save any one, since it would be only drifting down to a fiery end.

Perhaps the excitement was a little too much for Peter

He hardly knew what he was doing, the one idea uppermost in his mind being his desire to save the others.

When he had one leg over the basket Bob was just in time to clutch him.

"What would you do, mad boy?"

"Some one has to go to save the others."

"And you would sacrifice yourself?"

"Yes. I am of the least importance. Let me go."

He struggled to free himself.

"It is useless now!" cried Bob.

"Why useless? The balloon will bound upward as soon as I relieve it from my weight."

"But you need not go. I have discovered another way by which we may be saved. I need your assistance."

Pete believed him.

He drew back.

"Tell me what you mean."

"This. There is one little bomb left—it will generate enough gas to carry us up above the clouds."

At this Pete laughed aloud, almost hysterically.

"Saved! saved!" he shouted.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ONE UP, THE OTHER DOWN.

Not a second was to be lost.

Balloon Bob already held in his hand the little glass ball upon which all their hopes of salvation depended.

He wanted Pete's assistance in breaking it in such a manner that most of the gas generated from the commingling of the chemicals would get into the great silk bag, and help to inflate it.

It was an interesting operation.

A slip or a mistake would ruin them.

Carefully they went about their work, and as the gas entered the silk bag they noticed with joy a steadier movement to the balloon.

"We rise!" cried Bob.

His experience enabled him to detect the difference in the passage of air.

"Hurrah!" shouted Pete.

How exceedingly bright their prospects looked.

The prayers of the widow and Petite Barbara changed to thanksgivings.

Once aloft again they could drift on until beyond the reach of these dreadful fires.

Their despair was a thing of the past.

As they were slowly but surely climbing upward Pete suddenly cried out:

"Look! look! the other balloon!"

There it was descending rapidly, as though the occupants, just like our friends had been, without any suspicion of what lay below the clouds.

Doubtless they were also horrified when they discovered the hades below.

Shouts of terror could be heard.

The balloons were not fifty feet apart when they passed, one going aloft to hope and fresh air, the other bound to perdition.

Such frenzied shrieks the two men uttered.

They had almost lost their senses.

Mrs. Muscroft and the girl clapped their hands over their ears to shut out the sounds.

Bob was human.

These men were his mortal foes—they had done everything in their power to destroy him. Still, in this moment of horror he forgot all this, and felt for their distress.

Their appeals were piteous.

"Help us—save us!" they cried.

"Throw out your ballast."

"We have none."

"Then get rid of gun, boxes, shoes, anything and everything of weight."

"We have already done so," came the answer as the balloon sank swiftly.

"Then use a bomb and make gas."

"Our last one is gone!" came in a despairing shriek.

That settled it.

Nothing under Heaven could save them now.

Horrified, Bob and Pete continued to look over the edge of the basket while their balloon kept on mounting nearer the clouds.

They knew how it would end.

"There!" cried Pete.

They saw a blinding flash, and the sound was even borne to their ears.

That was the last ever seen of Professor Baxter and his companion, the Italian. Their fate was a terrible one. but no worse than befell scores of wretched people in those Northern forest fires.

The Sky Traveler reached the clouds, but went no further.

The aeronauts drifted along for hours in a southerly direction.

Would they ever see the end of the fires?

When anxiety again began to weigh heavily upon their minds they came to water, and at length the last of the fire had gone.

Behind them lay miles of blackened waste.

Some of Michigan's fairest domains had been rendered desolate by the sweep of the fire demon.

At length came their chance to descend.

The country presented clearings and they saw houses, people.

So, cautiously Bob allowed the balloon to drop and a successful landing was made, with the assistance of some men who came running at sight of them.

When they were safe on terra firma Bob left Pete in charge of the ladies and the balloon while he took the next train far Lansing.

Reaching the city he was soon in communication with a prominent lawyer, who, when he had a sketch of the matter, promptly undertook the task of outwitting shrewd Squire Muscroft.

The telegraph wires were brought into use and in the end, Muscroft, finding himself hedged in, gave up all his ill-gotten wealth on condition that they would not prosecute.

Everything was soon cleared up.

Bob was put in possession and found himself in a condition to indulge in his hobby to his heart's content.

Pete and he are at present working out the plans of a flying machine that will be made entirely of aluminum, and be able to turn like a ship, being governed by electricity. They hope to outdo Santos Dumont, the Wright brothers and all other inventors of derigible balloons or flying machines.

The question of ballast has been settled forever. When they desire to drop, a certain amount of gas is released—to stop, Bob has only to pull a trigger and a bomb is burst, affording a fresh supply. Thus they can rise and fall at pleasure, drift with the wind or make progress in a calm by means of a powerful electrical motor.

Bob has great hopes of solving the question of aerial navigation.

We are bound to hear from him again ere long.

A very thrilling and remarkable story for boys will be begun in next week's Ledger entitled, "Uncle Sam's Messenger; or, The Boy Who Found Garcia." Be sure and read it. It will interest and thrill you with its account of luck and pluck and wild adventures. It is by Colonel Cox, and is one of the very best stories the Ledger has ever offered to its army of boy readers.

(The end.)

A PHENOMENAL ROOSTER.

BY MAX ADELER.

"Perhaps you never noticed that rooster," said Cooley, pointing to a chicken on the fence between his yard and mine; "very likely you never paid much attention to him! but I don't care in what light you look at him, the more you study him the more talented he appears. You talk about your American iggles and birds of freedom, and all such slush as that, but that insignificant-looking chicken yonder kin give any of them twenty points and pocket them at the first shot. I pledge you my word that that rooster has fine traits of character that'd adorn almost any walk of life. He's just lovely! I don't say anything about his voice. That's neither here nor there. Although if you're going to allude to that subject, I just want to mention that, as far as crowing is concerned, he kin begin earlier, knock off later, and real off more crows in a minute than any other rooster in the State. And when he does try to spread himself on vocalization, he kin infuse emotion into it that'd almost bring tears to your eyes.

"Most chickens are kinder stupid; but what I like about him is, that he is sympathetic; he has feeling. I know last fall that my shanghai hen was taken sick while she was trying to hatch out some eggs, and that rooster was so compassionate that he used to go in, and sit on that nest for hours, trying to help her out so that she could go off recreating after exercise. And when she died, he turned right in and took charge of things; seemed to feel that he ought to be a father to those unborn little orphans, and he straddled around over those eggs for ever so long as graceful as a mermaid!

"He never got much satisfaction out of it, though. Most of them were duck eggs, and it seemed to kinder cut him up when he looked at those birds after they hatched out. He took it to heart and appeared to feel low-spirited and afflicted. He would go off and stand by himself—stand on one leg in a corner of the fence and let his mind brood over his troubles until you'd pity him. It disgusted him to think how the job turned out.

"Now you wouldn't think such a chicken as that would have much courage, but as true as I'm telling you he'd just as lief fight a wagon-load of tigers as to go to sleep. He got a notion in his head that that rooster over there on the Baptist Church steeple was alive, and he couldn't bear to think that it was up there sailing around and putting on airs over him, and a good many times I've seen him try to fly up at it so's to arrange a fight. When he found he couldn't make it, he'd crow at the Baptist rooster and dare it to come down, and at last, when all his efforts were useless, would you believe that rooster one day tackled the sexton as the weathercock's next friend, and drove his spurs so far into the sexton's shanks that he walked on crutches for more'n a week. I never saw a mere chicken have such fine instincts and such pluck.

"He is a splendid fighter, anyway, just as he stands. And so intelligent, too. Why, he had a little fuss with Pitman's Poland rooster here some time back, and instead of going at him and taking the chances of getting licked, that chicken actually put himself into training, ate nothing but corn, took regular exercise, went to roost early, took a cold bath every morning, and got a friendly pullet to rub him down with a corn-cob. It was wonderful! and in a week or so he was all bone and muscle, and he flickered over the fence after Pitman's rooster and sent him cahooting into the next world in the fourth round.

"I never saw such a rooster for intellectual culture. Now do you know I believe that chicken actually takes an interest in politics! Oh, you may laugh, but last fall, during the campaign, he was so excited about something that he couldn't eat, and the night they had the Democratic mass-meeting here he roosted on the chandelier in the hall, and every time General Beller made a good point that chicken would crow and flap his wings as much as to say: 'Them's my sentiments!' And on the day of the parade he turned out and followed the last wagon, keeping step with the music, and never dropping out of line but once, when he stopped to fight a Republican rooster belonging to old Byerly, who was on the Republican ticket for county commissioner. And in the morning, after the Democrats won, he just got on the fence out here and crowed so vociferously you could've heard him across the river, particularly when I run up the American flag and read the latest returns.

"Yes, sir. Now I know you'll think it's ridiculous when I tell you, but it's an actual fact that that very day my daughter was playing the 'Starspangled Banner' on the piano, and that rooster, when he heard it, came scudding into the parlor, and after flipping up on the piano he struck out and crowed that tune just as natural as if he was an educated musician. Positive truth, and he beat time with his tail! He didn't crow like any other rooster. Every morning he works off selections from Beethoven and Mozart and those fellers, and on Sundays he frequently lets himself out on hymn tunes. Why, I've known him to sit on that fence for more'n an hour at a time practising the scales, and he nearly kicked your rooster to death one day because your rooster crowed flat. I saw him do it myself. And now, I really must be going. Good morning."

I am going to kill Cooley's rooster at the first opportunity. I want him to have one thing less to lie about. He has too much variety at present.

On With the Game.

They tell of an old German, who has lived out in the country for many years, and who is very fond of playing cards—so fond that he does little else.

One evening, while he was engaged in a game with several congenial spirits, his barn, at some distance from the house, burned down.

His son came rushing into the room with the news. The old man didn't look up as he asked:

"Did you get the horses out?"

"Yes," said the son.

"Did you get the wagon out?"

"Yes."

"Did you get the harness out?"

"Yes," said the son.

"Vell," said the old man, "I gif two."

◆

The worst thing about work is that some men do too much and others not enough.

The Tale of a Mule.

"It was twenty years ago when I was in the building and contracting business," said the man with two watch chains, "that I took a mule as part payment of a debt. It was soon reported to me from the lumber yard that the animal was the meanest and most cantankerous specimen of his tribe. Hitched to a wagon no one could do anything with him. If yelled at to go he would back up and stand there with his feet braced. We bothered with him for a couple of weeks and then he was labeled "For Sale. Cheap."

"It happened that at that time I was building a chimney for a factory. When we had run the brickwork up forty feet high we got out of material and had to lay off for a few days. It was during this interval that a little Irishman in my employ came to me one day and asked:

" 'Mr. Blank, do you want that mule cured of his ways?'

" 'If it can be done.'

" 'Give me leave and I will either kill or cure him.'

" 'Go ahead.'

"What he did was to get help and hoist that mule to a platform on top of the chimney. The animal made no objection. When up there he gazed around as if he really enjoyed the landscape. After about five minutes the Irishman calls out to him:

" 'Gee-up with ye, ye lazy, good-for-nothing son of a gun!'

"The mule laid his ears back and commenced to retire his body to the rear. When he had backed three feet over he went. Those on the ground said he turned about six somersaults before he landed on his back on a soft spot. He lay there a minute and then he got up and began to canter about. When hitched to the wagon he wanted to pull the whole load, and from that date on he was the most industrious and ambitious mule in the State of Ohio. We had to fairly beg of him not to kill himself with hard work. I don't know how it would work in other cases, but if I was a poor man I'd go into the business of backing perverse mules off the top of forty-foot chimneys. Ten dollars a mule, and no cure no pay."

Bill's Welcome.

After fifteen long years he came back from the war.

"Old woman," he exclaimed, as he came in with muddy boots and clanking sword, "I am still alive."

"So I see, Bill," answered his wife, laconically.

"And would you like to hear why I wasn't killed?"

"Spit it out, Bill! Time is valuable."

"Wal, you remember that letter you gave me to mail to some firm up in Maine? You was sending a quarter for a recipe to tell how to live a hundred years. Wal, I forgot to mail that letter and carried it off to war with me. When the bullet hit the letter it landed on the quarter and my life was saved. That was fifteen years ago, old woman, and here I am as safe and sound as a dollar. Ain't you glad to see me?"

His wife slowly raised her eyes.

"Bill!"

"Yes, old woman?"

"Whar's that quarter?"

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How to Exercise the Bowels

YOUR Intestines are lined inside with millions of suckers, that draw the Nutrition from food as it passes them. But, if the food passes too slowly, it decays before it gets through. Then the little suckers draw Poison from it instead of Nutrition. This Poison makes a Gas that injures your system more than the food should have nourished it.

The usual remedy for this delayed passage (called Constipation) is to take a big dose of Castor Oil.

* * *

This merely make slippery the passage for unloading the current cargo.

It does not help the Cause of delay a trifle. It does slacken the Bowel-Muscles, and weakens them for their next task.

Another remedy is to take a strong "Physic," like Salts, Calomel, Jalap, Phosphate of Sodium, Aperient Water, or any of these mixed.

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It merely flushes-out the Bowels with a waste of Digestive Juice, set flowing into the Intestines through the tiny suckers.

* * *

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They do not relax the Intestines by greasing them inside like Castor Oil or Glycerine.

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THE VILLAGE ANGLER.

Under the spreading sycamore
The village angler stands.
A tough and sturdy boy is he,
With soiled and sunburnt hands,
And the imprints of his unshod feet
Are all along the sands.

He goes on Sunday to the stream,
Although, of course, that's wrong.
Whene'er a bullhead takes his hook
He yanks it, hard and strong.
And if he doesn't get a bite
He hums a cheerful song.

Loafing, fishing, pleasuring,
So through the week he goes;
Each morning sees him at the creek,
Whose fishin' holes he knows.
Each evening sees him trotting home
To seek a night's repose.

Thanks, thanks, to thee, my patient kid,
For the lesson thou hast taught.
Thus, at the fishing grounds of life,
Our shiners must be sought,
We waste our days and lie about
The fish we haven't caught.

A TRICK EXPOSED.

BY HERBERT JAMIESON.

Cyril Dunster's birthday is on the eighteenth of January, his wife's on the sixteenth of the same month. From this near juncture of dates springs this strange, yet veracious narrative.

This year on the Saturday afternoon preceding those important birthdays, the Dunsters made a desultory tour of the local stores. Cyril was not inclined for strenuous exertion, and found quite sufficient exercise in taking a Saturday afternoon stroll in the company of his wife. The fact that their steps usually led to the stores points rather to the dominating instinct of the woman than to any singular proclivity on the part of the man.

Today the January sales were in full blaze. The small price-cards, usually affixed to goods, had given place to large, flaunting red ones, and from shirt-waists to pillow-slips, everything shrieked cheapness. Whichever side of the street you took, temptation met you at every turn.

They stood together before the window of a big cut glass and china store.

"Oh, Cyril, how lovely!"

"I say, don't put your umbrella through the window. What?"

"That beautiful blue vase—the one behind the glass punch-bowl. Only eleven dollars, reduced from twenty. How sweet it would look on the top of our piano! It needs something like that to set it off."

Cyril grunted doubtfully.

"Certainly; but the scheme of color in our parlor happens to be green and pink. That colored vase wouldn't harmonize at all."

"But just think of the bargain it is! And we can easily in the spring get the wall-paper altered to match it. Oh, I should love it."

"Hadn't we better be moving on? The air is getting rather chilly."

"Do let me have another look! Cyril, it's a dream. If you don't mind, dear, I should like you to buy it for my birthday present. I don't want anything personal this time—at least I can do without it—but I should like that for the house."

Cyril, however, shook his head.

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, Hilda, but I really couldn't buy anything for our house that would strike so discordant a note of color as that vase. It is opposed to all my esthetic tastes. Please be sensible, and don't ask me again for it."

He turned away from the store-window, and his wife, noting his air of decision, followed.

On the way home they were a silent, uncommunicative pair.

"Cyril," she asked, as they entered the house, "what would you like for your birthday?"

"I haven't thought about it," he answered.

* * * * *

The following Monday evening, a couple of days before Hilda's birthday, Cyril Dunster, on his way home from downtown, chanced to pass the glass and china store. Without stopping, he cast a casual glance toward that distressing vase. It was not there! He stopped suddenly and carefully searched both of the expansive windows. The vase had vanished. Some one of atrocious taste had doubtless become its happy purchaser.

A grand idea struck him. There was still a little rift, dating from last Saturday afternoon, in the domestic lute. By putting himself out only a very little, he saw a way of mending it and letting the full music flow again. For Hilda, despite an occasional and always brief tendency to sulkiness, was a dear little girl.

He would go home with such a clever story. All day he had been thinking of Hilda's disappointment over the vase, and by the time the train stopped at their suburban station he had entirely relented. In his mood of penitence he had gone straight to the china store, intending to buy the vase, and lo! to his grim horror, it had vanished from the window. He had hurriedly entered the store, and there learned that another customer had just bought it; moreover, that it was the only vase of that kind and tint in stock. He had come sadly out of the store, and —well, he hoped she would not be terribly disappointed. He had really meant to get the thing for her.

Cyril paused with his hand on the door. Why, of course, he need not enter the store at all. But that would be playing the game too low. As a salve to his conscience, he would go inside.

The storekeeper came forward.

"What can I show you, sir?"

"I wanted a vase——"

"Certainly, sir! What color and about what price? Perhaps you wouldn't mind stepping to the back store. I've an excellent selection."

"I wanted a particular vase."

"Oh, one you've seen in the window, sir? I'll most certainly get it for you if you'll kindly point out which one it is."

"It—er—isn't in the window now. It was there on Saturday afternoon, when my wife and I passed. She took a particular fancy to it, and I am anxious to get it for her."

"Would it be troubling you too much to describe it?"

"It's blue—a rather deep blue—with fantastic lines down the sides. Looked like an Egyptian design."

"I know it. Now, it's funny you should have asked for that vase."

"You've sold it?"

"No." Cyril's heart came into his mouth. "I wish I had—I mean I wish I could oblige you now, sir, but the fact is that my young man, when getting something else out of the window, clumsily knocked that vase down, and it's lying over there in a dozen pieces."

Cyril could hardly refrain from uttering an exclamation of relief.

"Thanks, it doesn't matter in the least."

"Cannot I show you something else?"

"No, thank you, not tonight. I am sorry I troubled you. I——"

Here Cyril stopped—in his sentence and in his progress toward the door. An idea had sprung from his original idea, and the splendor and daring of the parent idea were as nothing compared with the splendor and daring of the child. The spirit of genuius was surely his this evening.

The storekeeper, smiling obsequiously, waited his pleasure.

"You don't know how that vase struck my fancy. I—er—know something about china. I wonder if you would let me have a look at the broken pieces."

"Certainly, sir. Step this way. Here they are. My young man was just going to the yard to throw them out."

Cyril carefully picked up one or two of the bits and turned them over and over with the loving air of a connoisseur. The storekeeper, who thought he knew where that china came from, regarded him somewhat curiously. What kind of crank was this?

"I say what, would you let me have all those pieces for?"

The storekeeper's breath almost left him.

"You can't put them together, can you?"

"I don't know. I should like to try—with Major's cement. And if I can't, broken bits like this, arranged artistically—among a lot of seashells, let us say—look very well in a parlor cabinet. What do you want for the lot?"

"Well, you see, my young man was just going to throw them out. I couldn't ask you more than a dime; I really couldn't."

"Done! I'll give you a quarter for them. Now, have them packed up, please, in a decent-sized cardboard box."

The shopman was slowly recovering from his astonishment. If he had kept his wits about him, he might have struck a better bargain.

"Can—I—er send it?"

"No, I'll take it myself. You won't be long having it done up, will you?" He sat down in a chair.

While the man retired to the back to tie up the package, Cyril indulged in a quiet chuckle. The full humor of his amended plan had burst upon him. What a blessing that the roads and walks were so slippery with ice and frozen snow, and that the way home was largely downhill!

His tale to Hilda would now be this: He had bought the precious vase, and, not caring to entrust it to a careless errand-boy, had insisted on carrying it himself. And then he had slipped on a treacherous piece of ice, and, in recovering himself, let the parcel slip out of his hand. Sick at heart, he had risen to his feet and pursued his way, but the crack and jingle within the package had been too ominous. He was very much afraid that the vase was badly broken.

Of course, no suggestion of meanness could possibly attach to his action. Hilda's delight that he had relented, and, to please her, purchased the vase would be unbounded, while tomorrow—there was a whole day yet before her birthday—he would get her another present, something personal, something feminine, that would instantly captivate her fancy. And his satisfaction that that atrocious vase—broken, of course, beyond redemption—would not desecrate their parlor would be profound. Domestic harmony would be thoroughly restored.

Here at last came the storekeeper with the parcel. Cyril paid over the quarter, which the man took with the air of a waiter receiving a tip, and the door closed behind him.

Now, however, much one may frown upon Cyril's action, it may at least be said that he was thoroughly conscientious in all he was carrying out. It would have been perfectly easy for him to have gone home without literally fulfilling his idea of coming into shape contact with Mother Earth, but his conscience did not permit that base line of action. At a point where not much danger seemed to attach to the exploit he slipped gracefully down, and, obsessed by the instinct of self-preservation, threw the parcel from him.

"Hurt, guv'nor?"

It was the voice of a laboring man, who, walking in his rear, had been prompt to render assistance.

"No, thanks, I——"

"Haven't been in 'The Ivy Green,' have ye? Guess ye haven't improved this 'ere china tea-set for your kid," and the man restored the parcel.

Cyril smiled feebly. Such jokes were in very poor taste.

A few minutes later Cyril entered his dining-room with a distressed countenance and a slight limp. Hilda rose with vague alarm.

"You're ten minutes late, Cyril. I've been so anxious. Oh, what's the matter?"

"I wish people—confound them!—would have the decency to keep their icy pavements sprinkled with ashes."

"Oh, you've fallen, dear! I hope you haven't hurt yourself?"

"Not much. But it's this." He held out the parcel.

"I'm truly sorry, Hilda, but it slipped from me, and I'm very much afraid it's broken."

"What is it?"

"That vase in Nixon's store you like so much. I went in and bought it for you."

"Oh, how very good of you!"

"Not at all! I knew——"

"Is it really smashed? I can't believe it. Perhaps there's only a little bit out. Let me have your knife, quick, and I'll see."

"The noise it made—er—I'm afraid—er"

He had given her his knife. She had hacked the string in three places. The brown paper which she tore off would never serve again. She was feeling among the contents. A loud exclamation escaped her.

It was the worst moment Cyril had ever known in his life.

That ass of a storekeeper had wrapped each bit of the vase in a separate piece of paper.

* * * * *

On the wall of Cyril's study and smoking-room hangs a picture—a copy of the "Soul's Awakening." It is a print of which he has avowed open detestation for years, and there it hangs—in judgment upon him.

Hilda gave it to him with her love on the eighteenth of January of this year of grace. If the woman had not taken that revenge, there would still be discord in the Dunster household.

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THE CHICAGO LEDGER
SATURDAY BLADE

A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY.

JUDD M. LEWIS.

[illegible] when jasmine are in blossom
And magnolias are white
In among the waxen greenness
Of their tall trees, and the night
Is filled with darting fire flies,
Millions of 'em seems to me,
A-criss-crossin' all the meadows
Then the south looks good to me.

When the summer stars are blinkin'
And the moon is in the sky,
And moonflower vines are climbin',
And perfumes are driftin' by
Like sweet spirits was a-goin'
Driftin' o'er the hills an' downs
Leavin' only in their passin'
Just the perfume of their gowns.

When the road runs on before me,
Sort of yellow-ribbon-wise,
And the stars are sort of dancin'
Like the mischief in your eyes,
And the night is full o' music
Of th' mockin' birds, and dew,
Then my heart goes out before me
Down the yellow road to you.

And my soul is full o' glory
Where the yellow jasmine wreathe,
And I pause to ketch the spirit
And to lift my head and breathe,
And it hardly seems I'm walkin',
Seems that I don't have to lift
Of a foot, the night uplifts me
And love guides me and I drift.

Drift past clumps of spreading live oaks
And where roses nod and lift,
Drift across the twisty bayou,
Past the bridge, an' drift, an' drift,
Till a something drifts to meet me
In the starlight and the dew,
And my arms clasp tight about it
And I look—and it is you!

You, with all your maiden graces,
You, with all your girlish charms,
Eyes a-glintin', tresses blowin',
And your slim necklacin' arms
Bringin' my face closer to you,
Closer—close as it can be.
That's the time the perfumed southland
And the world looks good to me!

Didn't Understand the Language.

BY MAX ADELER.

I alluded some time ago to an extraordinary visit to Ireland made by Mr. Hunks, a retired sailor, who lives in our village. A few nights ago Hunks related the story of another remarkable adventure of his. He said:

"About twenty years ago I was shipwrecked on the coast of Cuba, and I got to land without anything on me but a pair of trousers. The people were kind enough to me, but you know I didn't understand their lingo, and I had the awfulest time you ever heard of, tryin' to make 'em understand me by signs and gestures. Howsomever I made out somehow, and after stayin' there a few weeks I went to Havana, and shipped for New York aboard a small schooner. A day or two after we was out a violent storm came up, the captain and mate were washed overboard, the schooner was driven out to sea, and the rest of us couldn't tell where we were. A few days later the craft drifted on to a coast and went to pieces. I was the only man that got safe ashore. I didn't know where I was, but I felt pretty certain it was on one of them islands in the West Indies. Directly I seen a hut near the beach, and I went to it. There was a man inside, and I says to myself:

" 'Here's another one of them furriners that can't understand the only decent language on earth. There's no use talkin' English to him, that's certain.'

"I was scand'lous hungry, and I thought I would let the feller in the hut know I wanted somethin' to eat. So I opened my mouth and p'inted to it with my finger, and said:

" 'Aw-aw-aw-aw!'" Made a noise something like that to attract his attention.

"He looked kinder cross-eyed for a minute, 's if he didn't exactly understand. Then it seemed to strike him all of a suddent like that I had the toothache; so he went to the closet and fetched a pair of pincers and a monkey-wrench, and motioned to me that he thought he could extract that tooth. But I shook my head, and still pointing to my mouth I remarked ag'in:

" 'Aw-aw-aw-aw!' or words to that effect; and then he seemed to think maybe I'd swallered somethin' disagreeable, for he pulled my jaws apart and began lookin' down my throat.

"As that didn't appear to answer I began rubbin' my stomach with my hand, and I said:

" 'Ow-wow-wow-wow!' or somehow that way; and then a smile broke over the feller's face, and he let me know he understood me at last. He must have considered I had colic or somethin' like that, for he went to the cupboard and spread a mustard plaster, and then came offering it to me to put on. But of course I only shook my head, and put my hands on my stomach, and I groaned a little despairin' like. Then a happy thought struck him. He imagined I was p'isoned, and he fetched out a syringe and some injun rubber hose, and tried to rig up some sort of a stomach pump to bail me out.

"By this time I was getting mad, and I pointed to my mouth, and run my finger down the front of me to my stomach, to indicate the route I wanted the food to take. He thought what I expected him to do was to cut me open; so he got a carving knife out of the closet and began sharpening it on a brick. He was an accommodatin man. He was willin' to oblige. I never see a man more anxious to help a sufferin fellow creature than that chap was. But I was pretty near wild, and so, in order to let him know I was hungry, I began clappin' my teeth together and gruntin'. He concluded then that I had hydrophobia, and that a bad attack was comin' on, so he rushed a bucket o' water outen the room, and then he began feelin' of my leg to ascertain where the dog bit me. Then I forgot myself and exclaimed:

" 'I wish this magnificent jackass would scare up somethin' to eat.'

"Then he says: 'Why in thunder didn't you say so, then? I've bin thinkin' all the time that you was a furriner.'

" 'And that's what I've bin thinkin' of you. I didn't know you could speak English.'

" 'We don't speak anythin' else here in Jersey,' says he.

" 'Jersey!' says I. 'You don't mean to say this yer is the State of New Jersey, do you?'

" 'Jes so,' says he; 'Atlantic County, New Jersey; and you've bin makin' a fool of yourself all this time for nothin'.'

"Then he stuffed me full of vittals, and the next day I got in a waggin and come up home. But if ever I git wrecked again I'm goin' to try on my native tongue the fust thing. That feller might have ripped me up with that carvin' knife if I hadn't bin on my guard."

A Disgusted Husband.

"Is any one waiting on you?" asked the haughty saleslady, finally condescending to notice the shopping person.

"I'm afraid not," replied the latter. "My husband was—I left him outside—but I'm afraid he's become disgusted and gone home."

On a False Scent.

"Hist!"

"I have them at last!"

"Now away to the Secret Service men to give the den a black eye! All my life I have wanted to discover a den of counterfeiters, and here it is at last. I have piped the villains to their hole, and to prison they go. Sherlock Holmes is a great man, but there are others."

The chief of the Secret Service Department took his feet down off the desk when he heard the story and said he would get a move on him. It promised to be a dark night. He would surround the place with a score of men, and not a villain should escape.

Night came. It was a night manufactured to order. It rained. It blew. It howled and sobbed and sighed. Cats yeowled and dogs barked, and tramps hadn't had a mouthful to eat for four weeks.

Guided by the only and original discoverer, the den was quietly surrounded and at a given signal the brass band struck up and the doors were broken in. Fifteen men were found busy at work. Some of them turned pale, some red and some refused to turn any color at all.

"Surrender or you are dead men!" shouted the chief, and the echoes of his voice went hurling away into the night.

There was no resistance. He stepped forward to a table where a man seemed to be wrapping up plates for the printing of spurious notes and lifted one up. It weighed a pound. On the wrapper was printed the label:

"Pure Vermont maple sugar. We warrant every cake to be made of the purest sap."

The chief went outdoors and kicked himself. It was no den of counterfeiters, but simply a factory where the purest and best maple molasses and sirup were made from sorghum.

Baggage-Smasher Astonished.

"Here!" shouted the railway official, "what do you mean by throwing those trunks like that?"

The porter gasped in astonishment, and several travelers pinched themselves to make sure that it was real. Then the official spoke again to the porter:

"Don't you see that you're making big dents in this concrete platform?"

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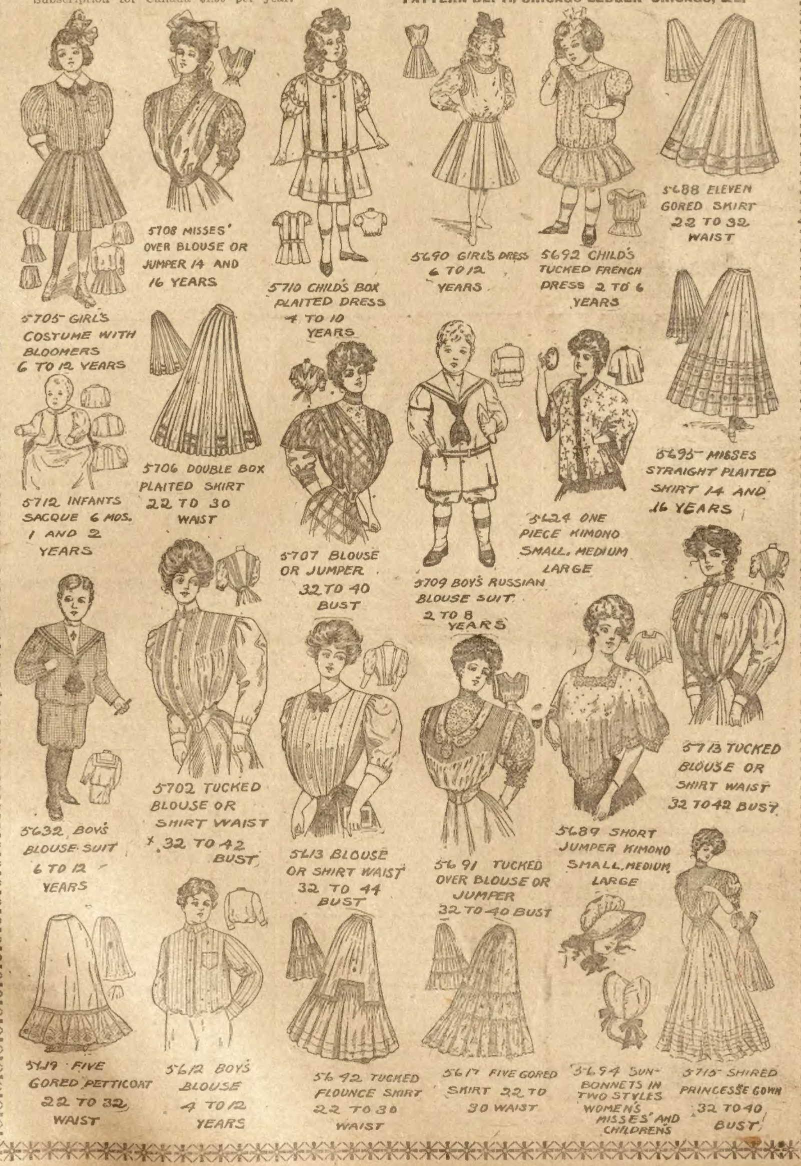
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FOR YOUTHFUL EYES

THE WISE WIZARDS.

The Wizardess went sailing across the
ocean blue;
Her tidy little vessel a fierce young ducklet drew.
The Wizardess was green of eye. Her
face resembled glue
East she sailed, and West she sailed, and
South, and also North;
To find a gentle Wizard—that was why
she sallied forth.

When that indignant ducklet would try
to slacken speed,
The lady's wand would touch him up, and
make him haste, indeed.
The Wizardess' hair was pink, and rather
like a weed.
North she sailed, and South she sailed,
and East, and also West;
But all the Wizards vanished when she
came; they said 'twas best.

Her vessel had a lovely little figurehead,
a bat;
And also very lovely was the Wizardess's
hat.
The shyness of those Wizards I am much
astonished at.
North she sailed and South she sailed,
and West, and also East;
But she never found a Wizard who would
suit her in the least.

Wanted to Go to Heaven.

George came from a small town to Chicago with his father, and while in the city rode up and down in the elevators in several office buildings, much to his delight, as it was his first experience of the kind.

The night he returned to his home his mother put him to bed and heard him say his prayers. This is what he said:

"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep;
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take—up in
an elevator."

Gets Relatives Mixed.

Little Ruth is 3 and is acquiring a vocabulary. Recently she returned from a visit in a distant city. While away she was taken to the zoo, and the elephant fascinated her baby mind. She was swinging on the old home gate, thinking of the huge pachyderm, although glad to be back among those who loved her, when the mailman passed.

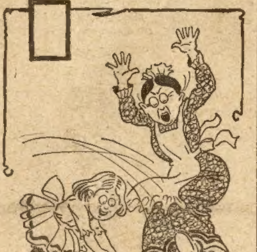
"Been away?" he asked, pleasantly.

"Yep."

"Where?"

"Wisitin' relephants," said Ruth.

Childish.



With the hatchet little Rose
Chopped off two of nurse's toes.
We thought nursie should have smiled;
We hire her to amuse our child.

Last Call.

Stuart was taken to church one Sunday for the first time. He witnessed the celebration of mass, the vestments of the priest and the white surplices of the altar boys interesting him greatly. He behaved admirably until the most solemn part of the celebration was reached—the elevation of the host. The sound of the gong as it echoed through the church seemed to make him think of fire engines and he became excited. Just as the sound from the last stroke on the gong was dying out he jumped up and in a voice that could be heard for some distance shouted: "Last call for breakfast."

VACATION TIME.

Soon off to the country will flock in a
hoard
The city folks, haughty and proud.
And the farmer will wish, when they've
crowded his board,
That his wife hadn't boarded the crowd.

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Jacko's New Home.

Jacko was a baby monkey—just old enough to enjoy swinging from branch to branch of the big, leafy trees in the forest where he was born.

One bright day Jacko and several other young monkeys were hanging upside down in the sun, swinging contentedly by their tails, when suddenly a big sailor man came along. Being so very young, Jacko had never seen a man before, and he was so surprised that he quite forgot to follow his companions when they ran away. As a result the sailor caught him and popped him in a bag, and when Jacko came out again he was on a big ship in the midst of the sea. He was very sick and sad for a while, for he wanted his forest home and his playmates very much, but he was a sensible little monkey and tried to forget all about his old home and to make himself contented in his new one. Just as he was beginning to feel happy again the big ship sailed into the docks, and the sailor sold poor Jacko to an organ grinder. Then Jacko became miserable indeed, for his new master was not always kind, and he half starved Jacko in order to teach him to dance, so as to amuse the sailors who lived around the docks.

One day Jacko was taken down to the dock gates, but he was so cold and hungry that he could not dance. His master, the organ grinder, grew very angry and beat poor Jacko very cruelly. Jacko tucked his head down under his arm and made a sad little crying noise, which amused the sailors and made them laugh, so his master beat him more and more, just to give the sailors fun and get them to give him pennies.

Now, it happened that Wilfred, a smart young midshipman, was at that moment leaving the docks, and feeling very happy, for he was on his way to his country home, where he was going to spend his holidays. He was thinking of his mother and dear little brother and sisters whom he was going to see, when he caught sight of Jacko, cowering from the blows.

"I say, stop that!" he cried. "What are you beating the little chap like that for?"

"He's got to do as he's told," growled the organ grinder.

Jacko was very clever, and he knew by the sound of Wilfred's voice that he was a friend. Quick as thought Jacko ran to him and nestled inside his coat.

"Poor little beggar," said Wilfred. "I say, how much do you want for him? I'll buy him.'

Very soon a bargain was struck, and Jacko traveled down to his new home inside Wilfred's coat.

What excitement there was in the family when Jacko first put out his head, and what a fuss Wilfred's dear little brother and sisters made of the monkey when they heard how cruelly he had been treated!

Jacko was soon the happiest monkey alive, for there were plenty of trees in the garden for him to swing from, and Wilfred's brother and sisters were his constant playmates. And how mischievous he grew, too! I think he spent half his time in the trees, making plans how to tease his friends. He would hang from the banisters and pull his little mistress' hair; and if the maids did not tie him up on washing days he would pull the pegs off the lines and let the clothes fly all over the garden.

But in spite of his naughty ways, his new friends loved him; and he loved them and was very, very happy—so happy, indeed, that he quite forgot that he ever lived in a forest.

THE CIRCUS.

Now a thrill of glad excitement agitates
the youthful breast,
And the boy with half a dollar counts
himself supremely blest,
While the prodigal who squanders dimes
and pennies as they come
Works with energy untiring to acquire
the needful sum.

Boys whose records have been shady in
the very recent past
Are upon their good behavior—much too
good, indeed, to last—
Cheerfully run on their errands, mind
what's said without a frown;
Just the usual condition when the circus
comes to town.

Many Are Cold.

Little Willie, aged 7, had studied his verse for Sunday school until his mother thought there would be no chance of his forgetting it. Meeting his teacher a few days afterward, she asked if Willie had recited his text perfectly.

"I'll tell you," replied the teacher, "what he said and you can judge for yourself. After a little hesitation Willie electrified the class by saying: 'Many are cold, but few are frozen.'"

She Misunderstood.

Helen, aged 5, and Dora, aged 8, were playing "visit" and the following conversation ensued.

"Howdy-do? Come right in."

"I just came over with one of my children," caressing a battered doll.

"Are your children all well?"

"No, they've had the measles; one of 'em died last night—at 8 o'clock."

'It ate a clock!" gasped Helen. "I should think it would die!"

When?

When is a clock on the stairs dangerous. When it runs down and strikes one.

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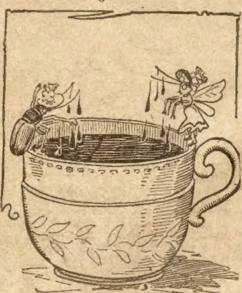
Bread is the staff of life; sugar is the cane.

High Toned.



Mrs. Fly met Mrs. Bug
In the cook's molasses cup;
But each, though meek, refused to
speak—
They were so blamed s-t-u-c-k u-p.